



AGAINST OFFENSIVE WARFARE

PART I (SECTION 17)

If a man enters an orchard and steals the peaches and plums, everyone who hears about it will condemn him, and if those above who administer the government catch him they will punish him. Why? Because he injures others to benefit himself. When it comes to carrying off dogs, swine, chickens, and piglings, the deed is even more unrighteous than entering an orchard to steal peaches and plums. Why? Because the loss to others is greater. It shows a greater lack of benevolence and is a more serious crime. When it comes to breaking into another man's stable and seizing his horses and cows, the deed is even more unrighteous than carrying off dogs, swine, chickens, and piglings. Why? Because the loss to others is greater, and if the loss is greater, it shows a greater lack of benevolence and is a more serious crime. And when it comes to murdering an innocent man, stripping him of his clothing, and appropriating his spear and sword, the deed is even more unrighteous than breaking into a stable and seizing someone's horses and cows. Why? Because the injury to others is even greater, and if the injury is greater, it shows a greater lack of benevolence and is a more serious crime.

Now all the gentlemen in the world know enough to condemn such acts and brand them as unrighteous. And yet when it comes to the even greater unrighteousness of offensive warfare against other states, they do not know enough to condemn it. On the contrary, they praise it and call it righteous. Is this what it means to know the difference between righteousness and unrighteousness?

If someone kills one man, he is condemned as unrighteous and must pay for his crime with his own life. According to this reasoning, if someone kills ten men, then he is ten times as unrighteous and should pay for his crime with ten lives, or if he kills a hundred men he is a hundred times as unrighteous and should pay for his crime with a hundred lives.

Now all the gentlemen in the world know enough to condemn such crimes and brand them as unrighteous. And yet when it comes to the even greater unrighteousness of offensive warfare against other states, they do not know enough to condemn it. On the contrary, they praise it and call it righteous. Truly they do not know what unrighteousness is. So they make a record of their wars to be handed down to posterity. If they knew that such wars were unrighteous, then what reason would they have for making a record of their unrighteous deeds to be handed down to posterity?

Now if there were a man who, on seeing a little bit of black, called it black but, on seeing a lot of black, called it white, we would conclude that he could not tell the difference between black and white. Or if there were a man who, on tasting a little bit of bitterness, called it bitter but, on tasting a lot, called it sweet, we would conclude that he could not distinguish between bitter and sweet. Now when a great wrong is committed and a state is attacked, men do not know enough to condemn it, but on the contrary praise it and call it righteous. Is this

what it means to be able to distinguish between righteousness and unrighteousness? So we know that the gentlemen of the world are confused about the distinction between righteousness and unrighteousness.

PART III (SECTION 19)

Mozi said: When the people of the world praise something as good, what is their reason? Do they praise it because it brings benefit to Heaven on high, to the spirits in the middle realm, and to mankind below? Or do they praise it because it fails to bring benefit to Heaven on high, to the spirits in the middle realm, and to mankind below? Even the stupidest man will reply that it is praised because it brings benefit to Heaven on high, to the spirits in the middle realm, and to mankind below.

Everyone agrees that the ways of the sage kings constitute a standard of righteousness. Yet many of the feudal lords of today continue to attack and annex their neighboring states. They claim they are honoring righteousness, but they fail to examine the truth of the matter. They are like blind men, who talk about black and white in the same way as ordinary men, but in practice cannot distinguish between them. Can this be called real discrimination?

Therefore when the wise men of ancient times planned for the welfare of the world, they were careful to consider and accord with what is right, and only then did they act. So there was no uncertainty in their movements, and they achieved speedy success and certain realization of their desires. To accord with what benefits Heaven, the spirits, and the common people—this is the way of the wise man.

Similarly, when the benevolent men of ancient times ruled the world, they strove for amicable relations among the large states,

united the world in harmony, brought together all within the four seas, and led the people to serve and honor the Lord on High, the sacred mountains and rivers, and the spirits. Many were the benefits they brought to mankind, and great was their success. Therefore Heaven rewarded them, the spirits enriched them, and men praised them. They were honored with the rank of Son of Heaven, enriched with the possession of the world, and their names formed a triad with those of Heaven and earth, enduring to this day. Such, then, are the way of the wise man and the means by which the former kings held possession of the world.

But the rulers and feudal lords of today are not like this. They all set about to examine the relative merits of their soldiers, who are their teeth and claws, arrange their boat and chariot forces, and then, clad in strong armor and bearing sharp weapons, they set off to attack some innocent state. As soon as they enter the borders of the state, they begin cutting down the grain crops, felling trees, razing walls and fortifications, filling up moats and ponds, slaughtering the sacrificial animals, firing the ancestral temples of the state, massacring its subjects, trampling down its aged and weak, and carrying off its vessels and treasures. The soldiers are urged forward into battle by being told, "To die in the cause of duty is the highest honor, to kill a large number of the enemy is the next highest, and to be wounded is next. But as for breaking ranks and fleeing in defeat—the penalty for that is death without hope of pardon!" So the soldiers are filled with fear.

Now to seize a state and overthrow its army, massacre its subjects, and undo the labors of the sages—is this intended to benefit Heaven? Yet it is the people of Heaven who are gathered together to attack a city of Heaven.¹ So they are massacring the subjects of Heaven, driving out the spirits of their ancestors,

¹I.e., all men are the people of Heaven and all cities are its cities.

overthrowing their altars of the soil and grain, and slaughtering their sacrificial animals. This brings no benefit to Heaven on high. Is it intended then to benefit the spirits? But to murder men is to wipe out the caretakers of the spirits, to cause the spirits of the former kings to suffer neglect, to oppress the subjects of the state and scatter its people. This brings no benefit to the spirits in the middle realm. Is it intended then to benefit mankind? But murdering men is a paltry way to benefit them indeed, and when we calculate the expenditures for such warfare we find that they have crippled the basis of the nation's livelihood and exhausted the resources of the people to an incalculable degree. This brings no benefit to mankind below.

Now when the armies fail to gain any advantage over each other, they say, "If our generals are not brave, our officers not spirited, our weapons not sharp, our ranks not well drilled, our force not large, our soldiers not in harmony, our authority not firm, our sieges not sustained, our assaults not swift, our control over the people not strict, and our hearts not hardened, then our allies among the other feudal lords will begin to doubt us, and if our allies begin to doubt us, then the enemy will have time to lay his plans and fulfill his desires."² But even if all these conditions are met before one sets out to war, the state will still lose its fighting men and the common people will be forced to abandon their occupations. Let us examine the reason for this.

When a state which delights in aggressive warfare raises an army, it must have several hundred high officers, several thousand regular officers, and a hundred thousand soldiers before it can set out. The time required for the expedition will be several years at the longest, several months at the least. During that time the leaders will have no time to attend to affairs of government,

²Reading *ying* instead of *lei*.

the officials no time to manage their departments of state, the farmers no time to sow or reap, the women no time to spin or weave. So in this case too the state will lose its fighting men and the common people will be forced to abandon their occupations. Moreover, there will be the damage and depreciation to the horses and chariots to consider, while if one fifth of the tents and hangings, army supplies, and weapons can be salvaged from the campaign, the state will be lucky. In addition, a countless number of men will desert or become lost along the way, or will die and end tumbled in a ditch due to the starvation, cold, and sickness caused by the length of the journey or the fact that supplies do not arrive in time.³

Such is the injury which warfare inflicts upon men, the harm it brings to the world. And yet the rulers and officials delight in carrying out such expeditions. In effect they are taking delight in the injury and extermination of the people of the world. Are they not perverse?

At present the states in the world which are fondest of warfare are Qi, Jin, Chu, and Yue. If these four states were in a position to order the rest of the world about, they could easily increase their present populations by tenfold and still have land left over to feed even more. This is because they have too few people and an excess of land. And yet now they go to war with each other over land and succeed only in doing further injury to each other's people. This is simply to destroy what one does not have enough of for the sake of what one already has in excess!

Now these rulers who delight in offensive warfare attempt to put a pleasing façade upon their doctrines and criticize Mozi,

³The text of this paragraph and the preceding one is in poor condition and the translation at numerous points is highly tentative.

saying, "Do you claim that offensive warfare is an unrighteous and unprofitable thing? In ancient times Yu launched an expedition against the ruler of the Miao, Tang attacked Jie, and King Wu attacked Zhou, and yet all three are regarded as sage kings. Why is this?"

Mozi said: You have failed to examine the terminology which I employ and do not understand the reasoning behind it. What these men did was not to "attack" but to "punish."

In ancient times the three Miao tribes were in great disorder and Heaven decreed their destruction. The sun came out at night and for three days it rained blood. A dragon appeared in the ancestral temple and dogs howled in the marketplace. Ice formed in summertime, the earth split open until springs gushed forth, the five grains grew all deformed, and the people were filled with a great terror. Gao Yang gave the command in the Dark Palace, and Yu in person grasped the jade staff of authority and set out to subdue the ruler of the Miao. Amidst the din of thunder and lightning, a spirit with the face of a man and the body of a bird came bearing a jade baton to wait upon Yu. The general of the Miao was felled by an arrow, and the Miao army thrown into great confusion. After this their power waned. When Yu had conquered the three Miao, he marked off the mountains and rivers, separated those things which pertained to above and below, and clearly regulated the four extremities of the world, so that neither spirits nor people committed any offense, and all the world was at peace. This was how Yu launched an expedition against the ruler of the Miao.⁴

⁴The text of this and the two succeeding paragraphs is in poor condition and requires considerable emendation before it will yield any sense. We have little information concerning the various legends to which Mozi here refers, and what we have is mostly from later writers, confused and contradictory.

In the case of King Jie of Xia, Heaven likewise sent down its direst command. Sun and moon failed to appear at the proper time, hot weather and cold mingled in confusion, and the five grains were seared and died. Spirits wailed throughout the land and cranes shrieked for more than ten nights. Heaven gave its command to Tang in the Biao Palace, ordering him to take over the solemn mandate from the Xia, for the Xia had fallen into grave disorder.⁵ Only then did Tang dare to lead forth his troops in obedience to the command and advance toward the border of Xia, and God caused the city of Xia to be secretly overthrown.⁶ After a while a spirit appeared and reported to Tang. "The virtue of the Xia is in great disorder. Go and attack it, and I will surely cause you to win victory over it, for I have already received the command from Heaven." Then Heaven ordered Zhurong to send down fire on the northwest corner of the city of Xia, and Tang, leading the army of Jie, conquered it. Then he summoned all the nobles to Bo and made clear to them the command of Heaven, sending word of it to the four quarters, and none of the feudal lords in the world failed to do obeisance to him. This was how Tang punished Jie.

In the case of King Zhou of Shang, Heaven would not sanction his power. His sacrifices were untimely; for ten days and ten nights it rained earth at Bo, and the nine cauldrons moved about. Phantom women came out after dark and ghosts wailed at night. A woman turned into a man, flesh rained down from Heaven, and brambles grew on the state roads. And yet the king continued to behave in an even more willful and abandoned way. A red bird holding in its beak a baton of jade alighted at the

⁵The seventeen characters which follow at this point seem to be a dittograph of the speech of the spirit, and have been omitted in translation.

⁶The meaning of the last part of the sentence is very doubtful.

altar of the Zhou state in the city of Qi and proclaimed: "Heaven orders King Wen of Zhou to attack Yin [i.e., Shang]⁷ and take possession of its state." Taidian journeyed to pay his respects to the Zhou ruler, the river cast up its chart, and the land brought forth the "riding-yellow" beast.⁸ King Wu ascended the throne, and in a dream he saw three spirits who said to him: "We have already drowned Zhou of Shang in the power of wine. Go and attack him, and we will surely cause you to win victory over him!" So King Wu went and attacked him, and replaced the state of Shang with that of Zhou, and Heaven presented King Wu with the yellow bird pennant. After King Wu had conquered the Shang dynasty and received the gifts bestowed by God, he assigned guardians to the various spirits, instituted sacrifices to Zhou's ancestors, the former kings of Shang, and opened up communications with the barbarians of the four quarters, so that there was no one in the world who did not pay him allegiance. This was how he carried on the labors of Tang. Thus, if we examine the cases of these three sage kings, we will see that what they did was not to "attack" but to "punish."

But still those rulers who delight in offensive warfare attempt to put a pleasing façade upon their doctrines and criticize Mozi, saying, "Do you claim that offensive warfare is an unrighteous and unprofitable thing? In ancient times Xiongli, the founder of the state of Chu, was first enfeoffed in the region of Mount Sui; Yikui, a descendant of Xiongju, was made ruler of the state of Yue; while Tangshu and Lü Shang were given possession of the states of Jin and Qi respectively. All of these states originally covered an area of no more than a few hundred *li* square, and yet

⁷Or perhaps the text should be emended to read "replace Yin."

⁸A mythical beast, said to resemble a fox and to have two horns growing out of its back.

by annexing their neighbors they have succeeded in dividing up the world among the four of them. How do you explain this?"

Mozi said: You have failed to examine the terminology I employ and do not understand the reasoning behind it. In ancient times the Son of Heaven enfeoffed over ten thousand feudal lords. And yet now, because of the annexation of one state by another, these ten thousand domains have all disappeared and only the four remain.⁹ But it is rather like the case of a doctor who administers medicine to over ten thousand patients but succeeds in curing only four. He cannot be said to be a very skilled physician.

Yet these rulers who delight in offensive warfare attempt once more to put a pleasing façade upon their doctrines, saying, "It is not that we have any lack of gold and jewels, courtiers and waiting women, or land. It is only that we wish to establish a reputation for righteousness in the world and attract the other rulers to our virtue!"

Mozi said: If you were really able to establish a reputation for righteousness in the world and attract the other rulers by your virtue, then it would be no time at all before the whole world had submitted to you, for the world has for a long time been plagued by warfare and is as weary as a little boy who has spent the day playing horse. Now if only there were someone who would conduct his diplomatic affairs in good faith and would think first of all how to benefit the other feudal lords; who, when a large state committed some unrighteous act, would feel concerned along with others; who, when a large state attacked a small one, would

⁹This is rather misleading. There were over a dozen more or less independent states in China in Mozi's time, though the four he mentions, Qi, Jin, Chu, and Yue, seem to have been the most powerful. The state of Qin, which eventually conquered the others and united China, was at this time undergoing a period of internal disorder and hence Mozi does not list it among the great powers.

go to the rescue of the small state along with others; who, when the walls and fortifications of the smaller state were in poor condition, would see to it that they were repaired; who, when the smaller state's supplies of cloth and grain were exhausted, would supply more; who, when the smaller state's funds were insufficient, would share his own—if one were to conduct his relations with the large states in this manner, then the rulers of the smaller states would be pleased. If others struggle while one is at ease, then one's own military position will become stronger. If one is merciful and generous, substituting affluence for want, then the people will surely be won over. If one substitutes good government in one's own state for offensive warfare, then one will achieve manifold success. If one weighs the expenditures of one's own army and compares them with the ruinous expenditures of the other feudal lords, one will see that one has gained rich benefits. If one conducts one's affairs in accordance with what is correct, acts in the name of righteousness, strives for lenience in ruling one's subjects and good faith in dealing with one's army, and thus sets an example for the armies of the other feudal lords, then one will have no enemy under heaven and will bring incalculable benefit to the world.

This is what benefits the world, and if the rulers and officials do not know enough to make use of it, then they cannot be said to understand the most important way of benefiting the world.

Therefore Mozi said: If the rulers and officials and gentlemen of the world sincerely desire to promote what is beneficial to the world and to eliminate what is harmful, they should realize that offensive warfare is in fact a great harm to the world. If they wish to practice benevolence and righteousness and become superior men; if they wish to act in accordance with the way of the sage kings and benefit the people of China, they should not fail to examine what I have said in my condemnation of offensive warfare.