

Selections from the Mohist “Dialogues”

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Book 46. Gēng Zhù¹

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46.3 Zhì Túyú and Xiàn Zǐshuò² asked of our Master Mòzǐ, “In undertaking righteousness, what is the major task?”

Our Master Mòzǐ said, “It is analogous to building an earthen wall. Those capable of building the frame, build; those capable of filling in the earth, fill it in; those capable of shoveling up the earth, shovel it; and then the wall is completed. Undertaking righteousness is like this. Those capable of discussing and disputing, discuss and dispute; those capable of explaining documents, explain documents; those capable of performing tasks, perform tasks; and then the work of righteousness is accomplished.” (46/10–12)

46.4 Wūmǎzǐ³ said to our Master Mòzǐ, “You inclusively care about all the world, but as yet there’s no benefit. I don’t care about all the world,

¹ This book is named after a disciple of Mòzǐ who figures in two of the anecdotes (omitted here).

² Probably two of Mòzǐ’s students.

but as yet there's no injury. Neither result having arrived, why do you deem you alone right and me wrong?"

Our Master Mòzǐ said, "Now suppose there is something burning here. One person carries water to pour on it, one person holds burning fuel to add to the fire. Neither result having arrived, which of the two people do you value more?"

Wūmǎzǐ said, "I deem the intention of the one carrying water right and the intention of the one holding fire wrong."

Our Master Mòzǐ said, "I too deem my intention right and your intention wrong." (46/12–15)

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46.6 Wūmǎzǐ said to our Master Mòzǐ, "As to your undertaking righteousness, people don't see and assist you, the ghosts don't see and reward you, yet you do it. You're mad."

Our Master Mòzǐ said, "Now suppose you had two servants here. One of them works when he sees you and doesn't work when he doesn't see you. One of them works when he sees you and also works when he doesn't see you. Which of these two people do you value more?"

Wūmǎzǐ said, "I value the one who works when he sees me and also works when he doesn't see me."

Our Master Mòzǐ said, "That being so, then this is you too valuing madness." (46/18–22)

46.7 A follower of Zǐ Xià⁴ asked our Master Mòzǐ, "Do gentlemen have fights?"⁵

³ This figure appears in several philosophically important conversations with Mòzǐ. Some commentaries suggest he was an Erudite (Rú), but his comments in §46.6 and §46.7 are inconsistent with their doctrines.

⁴ A disciple of Confucius.

⁵ Among some of the ancient Chinese elite, gentlemen or officers—men of social rank—were expected to be prepared to defend their honor in one-on-one fights. Several early texts denounce this custom, including *Mòzǐ*, *Xúnzǐ* (for instance, book 4), and *The Annals of Lü Buwei* (for instance, §16.8).

Our Master Mòzǐ said, “Gentlemen don’t have fights.”

The follower of Zǐ Xià said, “Even dogs and pigs have fights. How can there be officers who don’t have fights?”

Our Master Mòzǐ said, “That hurts! In your statements, you cite from the sage-kings Tāng and Wén, while in your conduct, you draw analogies to dogs and pigs. That hurts!” (46/22–24)

46.8 Wūmǎzǐ said to our Master Mòzǐ, “To set aside people of today to praise the former kings, this is to praise rotten bones. It’s analogous to a carpenter who knows rotten wood but not living wood.”

Our Master Mòzǐ said, “That by which the world lives is through the teachings of the Way of the former kings. Now to praise the former kings, this is to praise that by which the world lives. Not to praise what is praiseworthy is not benevolence.” (46/24–26)

46.9 Our Master Mòzǐ said, “The jade of Mr. Hé, the pearl of the Lord of Suí, the nine precious cauldrons—these are what the various lords call excellent treasures. Can they enrich the state, increase the population, order the judiciary and government, and secure the altars of soil and grain? I say, they cannot. The purpose of valuing excellent treasures is that they can benefit. Yet the jade of Mr. Hé, the pearl of the Lord of Suí, and the nine precious cauldrons cannot benefit people. These are not the world’s excellent treasures.

“Now if one uses righteousness to govern a state, the population will surely increase, the judiciary and government will surely be in order, and the altars of soil and grain will surely be secure. The purpose of valuing excellent treasures is that they can benefit the people, and righteousness can benefit people. So I say, righteousness is the most excellent treasure in the world.” (46/26–30)

46.10 Duke Zǐgāo of Shè asked Confucius about governing, saying, “Those good at governing, what are they like?”

Confucius replied, “Those good at governing, the distant are attracted to them, and old relationships are renewed.”⁶

Our Master Mòzǐ heard it and said, “Duke Zǐgāo of Shè failed to get what he asked about, and Confucius too failed to find the proper response. How could Duke Zǐgāo of Shè not know that, as for those good at governing, the distant are attracted to them, and the old are renewed? He asked what the means of accomplishing this is like. Don’t use what people don’t know to tell them; use what they do know to tell them.⁷ So Duke Zǐgāo of Shè failed to get what he asked about, and Confucius too failed to find the proper response.” (46/30–34)

46.11 Our Master Mòzǐ said to Lord Wén of Lǔyáng, “When great states attack small states, it’s analogous to children playing horse. When children play horse, they use their feet until they’re weary. Now when great states attack small states, for those attacked, farmers don’t get to plow and women don’t get to weave; they take defense as their task. For those who attack others, farmers also don’t get to plow and women don’t get to weave; they take attacking as their task. So when great states attack small states, it’s analogous to children playing horse.”⁸ (46/34–37)

46.12 Our Master Mòzǐ said, “Statements adequate to repeatedly guide conduct, make them regular. Those not adequate to guide conduct, don’t make them regular.⁹ Making regular those not adequate to guide conduct, this is empty jabbering.” (46/37–38)

⁶ A version of *Analects* §13:16.

⁷ Zǐgāo surely already knew that a good ruler forms new relationships with formerly distant people while reinvigorating existing relationships. However, he did not know how to do so. Confucius’s answer assumed he already knew how to do this and so did not explain what to do in a way he would understand.

⁸ Wars of aggression are exhausting and useless, as romping around playing horse is. The children are probably riding a hobby horse. See too §19.7.

⁹ Alternatively, “Teachings adequate to repeatedly put into practice, repeat them often. Those inadequate to put into practice, don’t repeat them often.” See too §47.5.

46.13 Our Master Mòzǐ sent Guǎn Qián Aó to the state of Wèi to recommend Gāo Shízǐ.¹⁰ The Lord of Wèi paid Gāo an extremely rich salary and installed him as minister. Gāo Shízǐ went to court three times and inevitably finished all he had to state, but none of his statements were put into practice. He left and went to Qí. He met with our Master Mòzǐ and said, “Because of you, Sir, the Lord of Wèi paid me an extremely rich salary and installed me as minister. I went to court three times and inevitably finished all I had to state, but none of my statements were put into practice. Hence I left him. Won’t the Lord of Wèi deem me mad?”

Our Master Mòzǐ said, “If leaving was the Way, what hurt is it to be accused of madness? In antiquity, Duke Dàn of Zhōu condemned Guān Shū, resigned as one of the three dukes, and went east to dwell in Shāng Yǎn. People all called him mad, but later generations cite his virtue and praise his name to this day. Moreover, I have heard, being righteous is not a matter of avoiding defamation and seeking acclaim. If leaving was the Way, what hurt is it to be accused of madness?”

Gāo Shízǐ said, “In leaving him, how dare I not follow the Way? In the past, you, Sir, made a statement, ‘When the Way is absent from the world, a benevolent officer doesn’t stay in a rich position.’ Now, the Lord of Wèi lacking the Way, were I to covet his salary and title, this would be for me to dishonestly live off others’ provisions.”

Our Master Mòzǐ was pleased and summoned Master Qínzǐ,¹¹ saying, “Listen to this! As for turning one’s back on righteousness to pursue a salary, I often hear of it, but turning one’s back on salary to pursue righteousness, only in Gāo Shízǐ have I seen it.” (46/38–46)

46.14 Our Master Mòzǐ said, “The gentlemen of the age, if they are poor and you call them wealthy, they get angry; if they lack righteousness and you call them righteous, they are pleased. How is this not perverse?!” (46/46)

¹⁰ The men mentioned are two of Mòzǐ’s students.

¹¹ Mòzǐ’s head disciple. He is mentioned again in §50.3.

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46.17 Gōng Mèngzǐ¹² said, “The gentleman doesn’t initiate. He transmits, that’s all.”¹³

Our Master Mòzǐ said, “Not so. The most ungentlemanly people, what is good of antiquity they don’t transmit, what is good today they don’t initiate. The second most ungentlemanly, what is good of antiquity they don’t transmit, but if they themselves have something good, they initiate it, as they desire good things to issue from them. Now to transmit but not initiate, this is no different from someone who dislikes transmitting but does initiate. I take it that what is good of antiquity, transmit it, and what is good today, initiate it, since I desire to increase the amount of good.”
(46/49–52)

46.18 Wūmǎzǐ said to our Master Mòzǐ, “I am different from you. I cannot care inclusively. I care about the people of Zōu more than the people of Yuè, care about the people of Lǚ more than the people of Zōu, care about the people of my hometown more than the people of Lǚ, care about my clansmen more than the people of my hometown, care about my parents more than my clansmen, and care about myself more than my parents, deeming each case closer to me.”¹⁴

“If you hit me, it hurts; if you hit them, it doesn’t hurt me. Why would I not resist what hurts but instead resist what doesn’t hurt? So, for me, there is killing others to benefit myself; there is no killing myself to benefit others.”

Our Master Mòzǐ said, “Your norm of righteousness,¹⁵ will you conceal it? Or will you tell it to others?”

¹² The most prominent representative of the Erudites (“Confucians”) in the *Mòzǐ*. Book 48 is named after him.

¹³ A reference to *Analects* §7:1. Compare §39:7.

¹⁴ If, as seems plausible, Wūmǎzǐ and Mòzǐ were residents of the same state, this paragraph implies their home was in Lǚ 魯.

¹⁵ As in Books 11–13, “norm of righteousness” here is *yì* 義, translated in other contexts as “righteous.” Mòzǐ regards the norm of conduct Wūmǎzǐ articulates—sacrificing others to benefit oneself, but not oneself to benefit others—as a proposed conception of what is morally righteous. He tests it to see whether it can be publicized and practiced

Wūmǎ said, “Why would I conceal my norm? I will tell it to others.”

Our Master Mòzǐ said, “That being so, then if one person is pleased with you, one person desires to kill you to benefit himself; if ten people are pleased with you, ten people desire to kill you to benefit themselves; if all the world are pleased with you, all the world desires to kill you to benefit themselves. If one person is displeased with you, one person desires to kill you, taking you to be spreading an inauspicious statement.¹⁶ If ten people are displeased with you, ten people desire to kill you, taking you to be spreading an inauspicious statement. If all the world are displeased with you, all the world desires to kill you, taking you to be spreading an inauspicious statement. This is what’s called ‘What passes from your own mouth is what takes your life.’”

Our Master Mòzǐ said, “How is your statement beneficial? Making statements without any benefit, this is empty jabbering.” (46/52–60)

46.19 Our Master Mòzǐ said to Lord Wén of Lǔyáng,¹⁷ “Now suppose there is a person here whose sheep, oxen, and other livestock are so plentiful that he hires others to butcher and cook them, and there’s so much food it can’t all be finished. Seeing someone making cakes, he rushes to steal them, saying, ‘Give them to me to eat.’ I wonder, is it that day and night he just can’t get enough food? Or that he has kleptomania?”

Lord Wén of Lǔyáng said, “He has kleptomania.”

Our Master Mòzǐ said, “Of the fields within the four borders of Chǔ, there’s so much wild, overgrown land that it can’t all be developed; there’re so many thousands of vacant villages that they can’t all be populated. Yet on seeing the empty regions of Sòng and Zhèng, Chǔ rushed to steal them. Is this different from that?”

consistently by everyone. He claims it cannot: if it is publicized, those who affirm it will seek to kill Wūmǎ to benefit themselves, while those who reject it will seek to punish him for spreading a vile teaching. Publicizing his norm would bring harmful, self-defeating consequences, in Mòzǐ’s view disqualifying it as a defensible norm.

¹⁶ Alternatively, an inauspicious saying or teaching. Wūmǎ’s norm is expressed as a statement, which functions as a maxim in guiding action.

¹⁷ A district in the state of Chǔ.

Lord Wén of Lǔyáng said, “This is like that. Chǔ really has kleptomania.”¹⁸ (46/60–63)

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Book 47. Valuing Righteousness

47.1 Our Master Mòzǐ said, “Of the myriad things, none are more valuable than righteousness. Now suppose we say to someone, ‘I’ll give you a hat and shoes but chop off your hands and feet, will you do it?’ Surely he wouldn’t do it. Why? It’s because a hat and shoes are not as valuable as hands and feet. Again, suppose we say, ‘I’ll give you the world but take your life, will you do it?’ Surely he wouldn’t do it. Why? It’s because the world is not as valuable as one’s life. Yet people kill each other fighting over a single statement.¹⁹ This is valuing righteousness more than one’s life. So I say, of the myriad things, none are more valuable than righteousness.” (47/1–3)

47.2 Traveling from Lǔ to Qí, our Master Mòzǐ met an old acquaintance, who said to our Master Mòzǐ, “Now in the world no one undertakes righteousness. You alone make yourself suffer to undertake righteousness. It’d be better if you quit.”

Our Master Mòzǐ said, “Now suppose there is a man here who has ten sons. One plows the fields while nine sit around. Then the one who plows the fields could not but work even more urgently. Why? It’s because those who eat are many, while those who plow are few. Now if in the world

¹⁸ Compare §50.2.

¹⁹ Such a statement (*yán* 言, also “saying” or “teaching”) might express a norm or conception of righteousness that someone sees as worth fighting for, or it might be an insult, which prompts the target to defend his honor.

no one undertakes righteousness, you should encourage me. Why stop me?” (47/3–6)

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47.4 Our Master Mòzǐ said, “In all statements and all actions, what is beneficial to Heaven, ghosts, and the common people, do it. In all statements and all actions, what is harmful to Heaven, ghosts, and the common people, reject it. In all statements and all actions, what conforms to the sage-kings of the three dynasties, Yáo, Shùn, Yǔ, Tāng, Wén, and Wǔ, do it. In all statements and all actions, what conforms to the tyrants of the three dynasties, Jié, Zhōu, Yōu, and Lì, reject it.” (47/16–18)

47.5 Our Master Mòzǐ said, “Statements adequate to change conduct, make them regular. Those not adequate to change conduct, don’t make them regular. Making regular those not adequate to change conduct, this is empty jabbering.”²⁰ (47/18–19)

47.6 Our Master Mòzǐ said, “You must eliminate the six biases. When silent, ponder; when speaking, instruct; when acting, work. Make these three alternate and surely you will be a sage. You must eliminate happiness and eliminate anger, eliminate joy and eliminate sorrow, eliminate fondness and eliminate dislike, and use benevolence and righteousness. Your hands, feet, mouth, nose, and ears undertaking righteousness, surely you will be a sage.” (47/19–20)

47.7 Our Master Mòzǐ said to several disciples, “If you undertake righteousness but are unable, you must not abandon the Way. To give an analogy, a carpenter who saws a straight edge but is unable doesn’t abandon the marking line.” (47/20–21)

²⁰ Alternatively, teachings or sayings that help to reform conduct should be repeated often. Compare §46.12. On “empty jabbering,” see too §46.18.

47.8 Our Master Mòzǐ said, “The gentlemen of the age, employ them as butcher of a hound or a hog, and if they are unable, they refuse it; employ them as minister of a state, and though unable, they do it. How is this not perverse?!” (47/21–23)

47.9 Our Master Mòzǐ said, “Now the blind say, ‘What’s bright is white, what’s dark is black.’ Even the clear-sighted have no grounds for changing this. But collect white and black things together and make the blind select from among them, and they cannot know. So when I say the blind don’t know white and black, it’s not by their naming, it’s by their selecting.”²¹

“Now as to how the gentlemen of the world name benevolence, even the sage-kings Yǔ and Tāng have no basis for changing it. But collect benevolent and unbenevolent things together and make the gentlemen of the world select from among them, and they cannot know. So when I say the gentlemen of the world don’t know benevolence, it’s not by their naming, it’s by their selecting.” (47/23–26)

47.10 Our Master Mòzǐ said, “The officers of today in using their lives²² are less careful than a merchant using a piece of money. In using money, the merchant dare not exchange it carelessly. He surely chooses good items. The officers of today in using their lives, on the other hand, are not so. Whatever their intention desires, they do it. In serious cases, they are subject to punishment. In minor cases, they are condemned and disgraced. So officers in using their lives are not as careful as a merchant using a bit of money.” (47/26–28)

47.11 Our Master Mòzǐ said, “The gentlemen of the age desire to build up their righteousness, yet if you help them cultivate themselves,

²¹ The blind can make correct statements using the names “white” and “black.” However, since they are unable to distinguish white from black objects, the writers consider them to not know white or black. Compare §19.1b.

²² More literally, how they use their selves or their bodies.

they're indignant. This is like desiring to build a wall, yet if others help you construct it, getting indignant. How is it not perverse?!" (47/29–30)

47.12 Our Master Mòzǐ said, "The ancient sage-kings desired to transmit their Way to later generations. Thus they wrote it on bamboo and silk and engraved it on metal and stone to transmit it to their sons and grandsons in later generations, desiring that their sons and grandsons in later generations would model themselves on it. Now to hear the teachings left by the former kings without practicing them, this is to discard the heritage of the former kings." (47/31–32)

...

47.14 Our Master Mòzǐ said to Gōngliáng Huánzǐ,²³ "Wèi is a small state, situated between Qí and Jìn, like a poor family situated between two wealthy families. If a poor family emulates wealthy families' many expenditures on clothing and food, its speedy ruin is certain. Now inspecting your house, we find hundreds of decorated carriages, hundreds of grain-fed horses, and hundreds of women clothed in finery. If we took the cost of decorating the carriages and feeding the horses and the resources needed for the fine clothing and used them to maintain soldiers, surely there would be in excess of a thousand men. If there were a crisis, you could station several hundred in the front and several hundred in the rear. Compared with stationing several hundred women in the front and rear, which would be more secure? I take it that would be less secure than the soldiers." (47/36–40)

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47.16 Our Master Mòzǐ said, "The gentlemen of the age hold the righteous officer in less regard than a grain bearer. Now suppose there is a man here bearing grain who is resting by the roadside and desires to get up

²³ A high minister of Wèi.

but is unable. Gentlemen seeing him, whether old or young, noble or lowly, would surely help him up. Why? I say, it's righteous. Now gentlemen who undertake righteousness carry on the Way of the former kings and expound it to them [the gentlemen of the age], but not only are they not pleased to practice it, they even proceed to denounce it. So this is the gentlemen of the age holding the righteous officer in less regard than a grain bearer." (47/43–46)

47.17 Our Master Mòzǐ said, "The merchants go to the four corners of the world, buying and selling at double or quintuple the price. Despite the difficulties of passes and bridges and the dangers of robbers and thieves, they inevitably do it. Now if officers sit and make statements about righteousness, there are no difficulties of passes and bridges, no dangers of robbers and thieves. This produces doubling and quintupling beyond calculation.²⁴ Yet they don't do it. So officers' calculation of benefit is less discerning than merchants'." (47/46–48)

...

47.19 Our Master Mòzǐ said, "My statements are adequate to use. To set aside these statements and change one's thoughts, this is like abandoning one's harvest to scavenge for scattered grain. Using others' statements to deem my statements wrong,²⁵ this is like throwing eggs against a rock. Use up all the eggs in the world, and the rock is still here. It's indestructible." (47/53–55)

²⁴ Broadening participation in discourse on righteousness would multiply the benefits to society beyond calculation.

²⁵ Alternatively, using others' teachings to negate or refute my teachings or pronouncements.

Book 48. Gōng Mèng

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48.3 Gōng Mèngzǐ²⁶ came to see our Master Mòzǐ wearing a ceremonial hat, carrying an official's tablet, and dressed in Erudites' robes, and said, "Does the gentleman attend first to his attire and only then to his conduct? Or does he attend to his conduct and only then to his attire?"

Our Master Mòzǐ said, "Conduct doesn't lie in attire."

Gōng Mèngzǐ said, "How do you know this is so?"

Our Master Mòzǐ said, "In the past, Duke Huán of Qí ordered²⁷ his state wearing a high hat and wide belt, with a gold sword and wooden shield, and his state was in order. In the past, Duke Wén of Jìn ordered his state wearing garments of rough cloth and a sheepskin coat, with his sword in a plain leather belt, and his state was in order. In the past, King Zhuāng of Chǔ ordered his state wearing a fancy hat with a tassel and an elaborate robe with a wide gown, and his state was in order. In the past, King Gōu Jiàn of Yuè ordered his state with his hair cut short and tattoos on his body, and his state was in order. These four rulers, their attire was different, but their conduct was nonetheless one and the same. By this I know conduct doesn't lie in attire."

Gōng Mèngzǐ said, "Excellent! I have heard it, 'One who delays the good is inauspicious.' Please, may I set aside my tablet, change my hat, and come again to see you, Sir?"

Our Master Mòzǐ said, "Please meet with me as you are. If you must set aside your tablet and change your hat before seeing me, then conduct does lie in attire after all." (48/15–22)

48.4 Gōng Mèngzǐ said, "The gentleman must be ancient in his speech and attire, only then can he be benevolent."²⁸

²⁶ The book begins with a collection of conversations between Mòzǐ and Gōng Mèngzǐ, whom it is named after. Gōng Mèngzǐ is the chief spokesman for the Erudites (Confucians) in the "Dialogues."

²⁷ That is, governed.

²⁸ The same saying is criticized in §39.6.

Our Master Mòzǐ said, “In the past, Fèi Zhòng, high minister for King Zhòu of Shāng, was the most vicious person in the world, while Jīzǐ and Wēizǐ were the most sagely people in the world. These spoke the same speech,²⁹ but some were benevolent, some unbenevolent. Duke Dàn of Zhōu was the most sagely person in the world, Guān Shū was the most vicious person in the world. These wore the same attire, but one was benevolent, one unbenevolent. That being so, then benevolence doesn’t lie in ancient attire and ancient speech. Moreover, you emulate Zhōu but don’t emulate Xià; your antiquity is not ancient.”³⁰ (48/22–25)

48.5 Gōng Mèngzǐ said to our Master Mòzǐ, “As to the ranks of the former sage-kings, the most sagely were established as Son of Heaven, the next established as high ministers. Now Confucius was learned in the odes and documents, discerning in ceremony and righteousness, and thoroughly familiar with the myriad things. If Confucius were made a sage-king, how could he not be made the Son of Heaven?!”

Our Master Mòzǐ said, “Now the knowledgeable must honor Heaven and serve the ghosts, care about others and moderate the use of resources. Combining these constitutes knowledge.³¹ Now you say, ‘Confucius was learned in the odes and documents, discerning in ceremony and righteousness, and thoroughly familiar with the myriad things’ and say he could have been the Son of Heaven. This is counting the teeth on someone else’s tally and taking oneself to be wealthy.”³² (48/25–28)

²⁹ “Speech” is *yán* 言, the same word elsewhere translated as “statements,” referring to teachings, assertions, or what one says. Here it probably refers to the three men using the same pronunciation or speaking the same local tongue.

³⁰ The Erudites modeled themselves on the high culture of the Western Zhōu dynasty (1046–771 BCE). The Mohists admired the founding rulers of the Zhōu but especially exalted the mythical sage-king Yǔ, founder of the even earlier Xià dynasty (ca. 2100–1600 BCE). (The historicity of the Xià is uncertain.)

³¹ “Knowledge” refers also to wisdom.

³² Tallies were paired strips of wood or bamboo used to record contracts. Amounts were recorded by carving notches across the two strips, forming “teeth” that fit together when the two halves were joined. The text seems to allude to the story of a fool who picked up one half of a used, discarded tally, counted the teeth, and concluded he had become rich. Learning the odes, documents, and ceremonies is analogous to counting the teeth on someone else’s used tally—it doesn’t show Confucius himself is competent.

48.6 Gōng Mèngzǐ said, “Poverty or wealth and longevity or early death are fixed by Heaven and cannot be decreased or increased.”³³ He also said, “The gentleman must study.”

Our Master Mòzǐ said, “Instructing people to study while holding there is fate, this is like commanding people to wrap up their hair while taking away their hat.”³⁴ (48/28–30)

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48.8 Our Master Mòzǐ said to Gōng Mèngzǐ, “According to the mourning ceremonies, when a ruler or parent, wife, or eldest son dies, for three years mourning clothes are worn. When an elder uncle, younger uncle, or brother dies, it’s one year. For a clansman, it’s five months. For aunts, sisters, maternal uncles, and nephews on one’s sister’s side, there is mourning of several months. If there are some intervals between mourning, you Erudites recite three hundred odes, strum music for three hundred odes, sing to three hundred odes, and dance to three hundred odes. If we use your statements,³⁵ what days do gentlemen attend to government, what days do commoners undertake work?”

Gōng Mèngzǐ said, “If the state is in disorder, order it; if it is in order, perform ceremonies and music. If the state is poor, undertake work; if the state is wealthy, perform ceremonies and music.”

Our Master Mòzǐ said, “As to the state’s being in order, we put it in order, and so it is in order. If the task of putting it in order is abandoned, then order in the state is also abandoned. As to the state’s wealth, we work and so it is wealthy. If work is abandoned, the state’s wealth is also abandoned. So even if a state is orderly, only if we encourage order without cease will things be acceptable. Now you say, ‘If the state is in order, perform ceremonies and music, if in disorder, order it.’ This is analogous

³³ Compare §39.4, §48.14, and books 35–37.

³⁴ Hair was worn long and wrapped into a bun to fit inside a hat. As this passage and §§48.8, 48.9, and 48.10 illustrate, a common way of criticizing a view perceived to be inconsistent or perverse was to give an analogy to an action regarded as absurdly contradictory or confused.

³⁵ If we apply the Erudites’ pronouncements or teachings.

to drilling a well for water only after choking on food or seeking a doctor only after dying. The ancient tyrants of the three dynasties, Jié, Zhòu, Yōu, and Lì, indulged in song and music and neglected their people. Hence their bodies were mutilated and executed and their states were ruined, all from following this Way.” (48/33–40)

48.9 Gōng Mèngzǐ said, “There are no ghosts and spirits.” He also said, “The gentleman must study sacrificial ceremonies.” Our Master Mòzǐ said, “To hold there are no ghosts yet study sacrificial ceremonies, this is like studying guest ceremonies when there are no guests. This is like making a fishnet when there are no fish.” (48/40–42)

48.10 Gōng Mèngzǐ said to our Master Mòzǐ, “You deem three years of mourning wrong. Your three days of mourning are also wrong.”

Our Master Mòzǐ said, “On the basis of three years of mourning, you deem three days of mourning wrong. This is like being naked yet calling someone whose clothes are open indecorous.” (48/42–43)

...

48.12 Gōng Mèngzǐ said, “Three years of mourning emulates a baby’s attachment to its parents.”³⁶

Our Master Mòzǐ said, “Now a baby knows only to be attached to its parents and that’s all. Unable to find its parents, it cries without cease. What is the reason for this? It’s the height of ignorance. That being so, then how is the knowledge of the Erudites any better than a baby’s?!” (48/44–46)

...

³⁶ Some Erudites held that the three-year mourning rite symbolically reflects children’s special reliance on and attachment to their parents in the first three years of life. See *Analects* §17.21.

48.14 Our Master Mòzǐ said to Chéngzǐ,³⁷ “The Way of the Erudites includes four policies that are each enough to ruin the world.³⁸

“The Erudites deem Heaven unseeing and the ghosts inanimate, displeasing Heaven and the ghosts. This is enough to ruin the world.

“Again, they conduct rich burials and prolonged mourning, with multiple inner and outer coffins and many layers of shrouds, and their funeral processions are like moving house. For three years they cry and weep, until they cannot stand without support or walk without a cane, their ears hear nothing, and their eyes see nothing. This is enough to ruin the world.

“Again, they sing to strings and dance to drums, practicing songs and music. This is enough to ruin the world.

“Again, they deem that fate exists, holding that poverty or wealth, longevity or early death, order or disorder, security or danger have fixed limits that cannot be decreased or increased.³⁹ If superiors practice this, they will surely not attend to government; if subordinates practice it, they will surely not undertake work. This is enough to ruin the world.”

Chéngzǐ said, “You go too far, Sir, in defaming the Erudites!”

Our Master Mòzǐ said, “If the Erudites indeed don’t have four policies such as these and I state that they do, this is defaming them. Now if the Erudites indeed have these four policies and I state them, it’s not defaming them, it’s reporting what I’ve heard.”

Chéngzǐ left without remark. Our Master Mòzǐ said, “Come back!” He returned, sat back down, and continued, “Just now, Sir, some of your statements can be listened to. But if your statements stand, this entails not praising Yǔ and not denouncing Jié and Zhòu.”⁴⁰

³⁷ Possibly the same person as Chéng Fǎn in Book 7.

³⁸ Since the phrase *tiān xià* 天下 refers specifically to the social world, not the natural world, plausible alternative interpretations include “enough to destroy society” or “enough to lose the empire.”

³⁹ Compare §§39.4, 48.6.

⁴⁰ Chéngzǐ complains that Mòzǐ’s contention that he is merely reporting the Erudites’ practices and not defaming them eliminates the notions of praise and blame. Mòzǐ here construes *huǐ* 毀 (defame/denounce/revile) as “slander,” but as Chéngzǐ points out, the same word also refers to justified condemnation of wrongdoers.

Our Master Mòzǐ said, “Not so. Now in responding to remarks someone maintains, one does so in proportion to their contentions; this is intelligence. If the attack is heavy, then defend heavily; if the attack is light, then defend lightly. Responding to remarks someone maintains in proportion to their contentions, this is like hitting a moth with a cart shaft.”⁴¹ (48/49–58)

48.15 Our Master Mòzǐ engaged in disputation with Chéngzǐ and cited Confucius. Chéngzǐ said, “You deem the Erudites wrong.⁴² Why cite Confucius?”

Our Master Mòzǐ said, “This is something that indeed fits the facts and can’t be changed. Now when birds learn about the hazard of heat and drought, they fly high; when fish hear about the hazard of heat and drought they swim deep. In these cases, even if the sage-kings Yǔ and Tāng were planning for them, surely they’d be unable to change anything.⁴³ Fish and birds can be called ignorant, but in some cases Yǔ and Tāng still go along with them. Now should I never cite Confucius?” (48/58–61)

...

48.18 A person who came to study with our Master Mòzǐ said to him, “Sir, you take ghosts and spirits to be seeing and knowing,⁴⁴ able to bless people or curse them with misfortune. Those who do good, they bless; those who do vicious things, they curse. Now I have served you, sir, a

⁴¹ The shaft mentioned is a thill, one of the two shafts between which a horse is hitched to pull a carriage. Some commentaries suggest the word for “moth” is a variant for “ant.” Commentators offer various interpretations of the closing simile. One view is that using a shaft to hit an ant illustrates how easy it is to debate by responding proportionally to the opponent’s claims. Another, perhaps more plausible, view is that using a shaft to hit an ant is disproportionate and ineffective, and so the last line is missing a negative. An appropriate interpretation might then be: “Responding to someone’s remarks *without* balancing our rhetoric against their contentions is like using an elephant gun to kill a gnat.”

⁴² Alternatively, you condemn or reject the Erudites.

⁴³ Even the sage-kings could not plan better tactics for these creatures to avoid the hazards.

⁴⁴ That is, sentient and sapient.

long time, yet blessings have not come. Could it be that some of your statements are mistaken? Or that the ghosts and spirits are unseeing? Why do I not get blessings?”

Our Master Mòzǐ said, “Even though you have not got blessings, how is it that my statements are mistaken, and how is it that the ghosts and spirits are unseeing? Surely you have heard about there being a punishment for concealing a fugitive?”

He replied, “I haven’t heard about it.”

Our Master Mòzǐ said, “Now suppose there is a person here who is ten times more virtuous than you. Are you able to praise him ten times while praising yourself only once?”

He replied, “I’m unable.”

“Suppose there is a man here who is a hundred times more virtuous than you. Are you able to praise his goodness your whole life, without praising yourself even once?”

He replied, “I’m unable.”

Our Master Mòzǐ said, “Even someone who conceals just one person commits a crime. Now what you conceal is as much as this—you’re committing a heavy crime.⁴⁵ What blessings could you seek?!” (48/69–76)

48.19 Our Master Mòzǐ had an illness. Díe Bǐ entered and asked, “Sir, you take the ghosts and spirits to be seeing and able to bring misfortune or blessings. Those who do good, they reward; those who do bad, they punish. Now you, Sir, are a sage. Why do you have an illness? Could it be that some of your statements are mistaken? Or that the ghosts and spirits are unseeing and unknowing?”

Our Master Mòzǐ said, “Even supposing I have an illness, how is it that they are unseeing? People can catch an illness in many ways. Some get ill from the cold or heat, some from exhaustion. If there are a hundred

⁴⁵ The implication is that many others are more worthy of blessings, and so in seeking blessings for himself rather than praising others, the man is concealing others’ good conduct. He thus commits an ethical transgression analogous to concealing a fugitive.

doors and you close one of them, how is it that a robber has no way in?”⁴⁶
(48/76–79)

48.20 Some disciples reported to our Master Mòzǐ that they wished to study archery. Our Master Mòzǐ said, “You cannot. Now the knowledgeable⁴⁷ surely measure what their strength is capable of achieving and undertake it. Even the finest soldiers in the state cannot fight while holding someone up.⁴⁸ Now you are not the finest soldiers in the state. How could you be capable of both completing your studies and mastering archery?!” (48/79–81)

...

Book 49. The Questions of Lǚ

49.1 The Lord of Lǚ said to our Master Mòzǐ, “I fear that Qí will attack me. Can this be prevented?”⁴⁹

Our Master Mòzǐ said, “Yes. In the past, the sage-kings of the three dynasties, Yǔ, Tāng, Wén, and Wǔ, were feudal lords of only a hundred *lǐ*,⁵⁰ but they expounded loyalty and their conduct was righteous, and so they gained the world.⁵¹ The tyrants of the three dynasties, Jié, Zhòu, Yōu,

⁴⁶ Compare §49.15.

⁴⁷ That is, the wise.

⁴⁸ That is, they cannot do two things at once.

⁴⁹ The Lǚ in the title of this book refers to the state of Lǚ, the most likely candidate for Mòzǐ’s home state. The Lord of Lǚ mentioned here is the ruler of Lǚ, a different person from Lord Wén of Lǚ Yáng mentioned in §46.11, §46.19, and several passages in this book. Lǚ Yáng was a district in the state of Chǔ.

⁵⁰ A *lǐ* was a unit of measurement of roughly 400 meters.

⁵¹ They became rulers of all the world.

and Lì, incited enmity and resentment and their conduct was vicious, and so they lost the world.

“I hope your Lordship may honor Heaven and serve the ghosts above, care about and benefit the common people below, richly prepare furs and coin, make your remarks humble, urgently pay respects to the lords of neighboring states, and lead your state to serve Qí—then trouble can be prevented. Other than this, there’s really nothing that can be done.”
(49/1–4)

...

49.4 Lord Wén of Lǚ Yáng was about to attack Zhèng. Our Master Mòzǐ heard about it and stopped him, saying to Lord Wén, “Now suppose within the four borders of Lǚ Yáng large cities attacked the small cities and great clans assaulted the small clans, killing their people and taking their oxen, horses, dogs, swine, bolts of silk, grain, and goods. What would that be like?”

Lord Wén of Lǚ Yáng said, “Within the four borders of Lǚ Yáng, all are my subjects. Now if large cities attacked the small cities and great clans assaulted the small clans, seizing their goods, then I would surely punish them heavily.”

Our Master Mòzǐ said, “Now Heaven inclusively possesses all the world just as your Lordship possesses the territory within your four borders. Now you mobilize an army to attack Zhèng. Could Heaven’s punishment not come?”

Lord Wén of Lǚ Yáng said, “Sir, why stop me from attacking Zhèng? My attacking Zhèng follows Heaven’s intent. For three generations, the people of Zhèng have murdered their ruler. Heaven has punished them, causing three years of scarcity. I will assist Heaven in punishing them.”

Our Master Mòzǐ said, “For three generations, the people of Zhèng have murdered their ruler and Heaven has punished them, causing three years of scarcity. Heaven’s punishment is sufficient. Yet now you deploy your army to attack Zhèng, saying ‘My attacking Zhèng follows Heaven’s intent.’ By analogy, suppose there is a man here whose son is hale and

hearty but worthless, so his father whips him with a bamboo cane. The father of the neighboring family then beats him with a wooden staff, saying, ‘My beating him is following his father’s intent.’ How is this not perverse?!” (49/12–20)

49.5 Our Master Mòzǐ said to Lord Wén of Lǔyáng, “[The rulers of today] attack neighboring states, kill their people, take their oxen and horses, grain, and goods, and then write their deeds on bamboo and silk, engrave them on metal and stone, and inscribe them on bells and cauldrons to pass down to their sons and grandsons in later generations, saying, ‘No one has as much as I.’ Now suppose commoners were similarly to attack neighboring families, kill their people, seize their dogs and swine, food, and clothing, and similarly write their deeds on bamboo and silk and inscribe them on vessels and dishes to pass down to their sons and grandsons in later generations, saying, ‘No one has as much as I.’ How could this be acceptable?”⁵²

Lord Wén of Lǔ Yáng said, “That being so, then if I look at things on the basis of your statement, what all the world calls acceptable is not necessarily so.” (49/20–24)

49.6 Our Master Mòzǐ said to Lord Wén of Lǔyáng, “The gentlemen of the age all know the little things but don’t know the big things. Suppose there is a man here, if he steals a hound or hog, they call him unbenevolent, but if he steals a state or a city, they deem him righteous. It’s analogous to seeing a small amount of white and calling it white, yet seeing a large amount of white and calling it black. Thus the gentlemen of the age know the little things but don’t know the big things—this is what this statement refers to.”⁵³ (49/24–26)

49.7 Lord Wén of Lǔyáng said to our Master Mòzǐ, “South of Chǔ there is a country Qiáo where they eat people. In their country, when the

⁵² Compare §17.2 and §28.5a.

⁵³ On black and white, compare §§17.2 and 28.5c. On the little things versus the big things, compare §§9.5b, 26.1, 27.2a, 28.1a, 28.5b.

eldest son is born, they chop him up and eat him, calling this ‘advantageous to the younger brothers.’ If the meat is delicious, they offer some to their ruler. If the ruler is pleased, he rewards the father. How is this not a vile custom?!”⁵⁴

Our Master Mòzǐ said, “Even the customs of the central states are also like this. Killing the father and rewarding the son, how is this different from eating the son and rewarding the father?! If we don’t use benevolence and righteousness, on what grounds do we deem the barbarians wrong for eating their sons?” (49/26–30)

...

49.12 Among the country people south of Lǚ there was one Wú Lǚ. In the winter, he made pottery, in the summer, he plowed the fields. He compared himself to the sage-king Shùn. Our Master Mòzǐ heard about him and went to meet him.

Wú Lǚ said to our Master Mòzǐ, “Just be righteous, that’s all. What’s the use of making statements about it?”⁵⁵

Our Master Mòzǐ said, “What you call righteous, does it too involve those who have strength laboring for others, those who have resources sharing them with others?”

Wú Lǚ said, “It does.”

Our Master Mòzǐ said, “I have calculated it. I considered plowing in order to feed the people of the world. Even if successful, however, this amounts to just a single farmer’s plowing. Divide it among all the world, and people cannot get even one pint of grain each. Even if in this way they do manage to get one pint of grain, it can be seen that this cannot satisfy all the hungry people in the world.

“I considered weaving to clothe the people of the world. Even if successful, however, this amounts to just a single woman’s weaving. Divide it among all the world, and people cannot get even one foot of cloth each.

⁵⁴ Compare §25.7.

⁵⁵ What is the point of gathering followers and traveling about offering teachings or making pronouncements about righteousness, as Mòzǐ does?

Even if in this way they do manage to get one foot of cloth, it can be seen that this cannot warm all the cold people in the world.

“I considered donning tough armor, wielding a sharp sword, and rescuing the various lords from troubles. Even if successful, however, this amounts to just a single soldier’s fighting. It can be seen that a single soldier’s fighting cannot defend against an entire army.

“I take it that none of these is as good as reciting the Ways of the former kings and seeking their explanations; mastering the statements of the sages and examining their remarks; above, persuading kings, dukes, and great men, and, below, persuading commoners and the man in the street. If kings, dukes, and great men put my statements to use, the state will surely be in order. If commoners and the man in the street put my statements to use, their conduct will surely be refined. So I take it that although I don’t plow to feed the hungry or weave to clothe the cold, my accomplishments are more worthy than someone who plows to feed them or weaves to clothe them. So I take it that although I don’t plow or weave, my accomplishments are more worthy than plowing and weaving.”

Wú Lù said to our Master Mòzǐ, “Just be righteous, that’s all. What’s the use of making statements about it?”

Our Master Mòzǐ said, “Suppose the world did not know how to plow. Whose accomplishment would be greater, someone who teaches others to plow, or someone who plows by himself without teaching others to plow?”

Wú Lù said, “The one who teaches others to plow, his accomplishment would be greater.”

Our Master Mòzǐ said, “Suppose we are attacking an unrighteous state. Whose accomplishment would be greater, someone who drums and encourages the masses to advance, or someone who doesn’t drum and encourage the masses to advance, but advances by himself?”

Wú Lù said, “The one who drums and encourages the masses to advance, his accomplishment would be greater.”

Our Master Mòzǐ said, “The commoners and men in the street of the world knowing little of righteousness, the accomplishment of someone who teaches the world about righteousness is also greater. Why not make

statements about it? If I succeed in drumming people to advance toward righteousness, then how could my righteousness not advance further?!”
(49/40–54)

...

49.14 Our Master Mòzǐ visited Wèi Yuè, who said: “Having been granted an audience with the rulers of the four corners of the world, what would you expound first?”

Our Master Mòzǐ said, “Whenever you enter a state, you must select a task and set to work at it. If the state is in disorder, expound ‘promoting the worthy’ and ‘identifying upward’; if the state is impoverished, expound ‘moderation in use’ and ‘moderation in burial’; if the state overindulges in musical entertainment, expound ‘condemning music’ and ‘condemning fate’; if the state is dissolute and indecorous, expound ‘honoring Heaven’ and ‘serving ghosts’; if the state is devoted to aggression and conquest, expound ‘inclusive care’ and ‘condemning aggression.’ So I say, select a task and set to work at it.” (49/61–64)

49.15 Our Master Mòzǐ recommended Cáo Gōngzǐ for a position in Sòng. After three years he returned, saw our Master Mòzǐ, and said, “When I first came to study with you, I wore a rough hemp coat and ate soup of grasses and leaves. If I got some in the morning, I got none in the evening, and I had nothing to offer in sacrifice to the ghosts and spirits. Now through your teachings, Sir, my household is better off than at first. Having a better off household, I meticulously offer sacrifices to the ghosts and spirits. However, many people in my household died, my livestock don’t breed, and I’ve been swamped with illnesses. I’m not convinced your Way is usable.”

Our Master Mòzǐ said, “Not so. Now the ghosts and spirits desire much from people. They desire people in positions of high rank and salary to yield them to those more worthy and those with many resources to share them with the poor. How could the ghosts and spirits desire only to grab the sacrificial food you offer them? Now you hold a position of high

rank and salary and don't yield it to the more worthy, this is one inauspicious thing. You have many resources and don't share them with the poor, this is a second inauspicious thing. Now you serve the ghosts and spirits merely by offering sacrifices, yet you say, 'Where do illnesses come from?' This is like closing one door among a hundred and saying, 'Where do robbers come in?'⁵⁶ You're like this, yet you seek blessings from ghosts who fault you—how could this be acceptable?!" (49/64–71)

...

49.22 Gōngshūzǐ said to our Master Mòzǐ, "Before I saw you, I desired to take Sòng.⁵⁷ Since I saw you, were someone to give me Sòng unrighteously, I wouldn't accept it."

Our Master Mòzǐ said, "Before I saw you, you desired to take Sòng. Since I saw you, were someone to give you Sòng unrighteously, you wouldn't accept it. This is my giving you Sòng. If you strive to undertake righteousness, I will yet give you the whole world." (49/94–97)

Book 50. Gōngshū

50.1 Gōngshū Bān⁵⁸ built cloud-ladder machines⁵⁹ for Chǔ with which to attack Sòng.⁶⁰ Our Master Mòzǐ heard about it and, starting from Qí,⁶¹ walked ten days and ten nights to arrive in Yíng.⁶² He met Gōngshū Bān.

⁵⁶ Compare §48.19.

⁵⁷ Gōngshū was employed by the King of Chǔ to attack the city of Sòng. See §50.1.

⁵⁸ A famous ancient engineer and inventor, also known as Lǚ Bān. In later centuries, he came to be revered as China's patron saint of carpenters and builders.

⁵⁹ Siege engines for scaling city walls.

⁶⁰ Chǔ was a large, powerful southern state, Sòng a small, weak central state.

⁶¹ A powerful northeastern state.

Gōngshū Bān said, “Sir, what commands do you have for me to carry out?”⁶³

Our Master Mòzǐ said, “In the north there is a person who humiliated me. I wish to have you kill him.”

Gōngshū Bān was displeased.

Our Master Mòzǐ said, “Please let me offer you ten pieces of gold.”

Gōngshū Bān said, “My norm of righteousness is certainly not to kill people.”

Our Master Mòzǐ stood up, bowed twice, and said, “Please let me explain. From the north, I heard that you made ladders to attack Sòng. What crime has Sòng committed?! The state of Jīng⁶⁴ has a surplus of land but a shortage of people. Killing what’s in shortage to fight for what’s in surplus cannot be called knowledge.⁶⁵ Sòng is innocent yet you attack it—this cannot be called benevolence. To know something yet not strive for it cannot be called loyalty.⁶⁶ To strive for something yet not succeed cannot be called strength. Your norm of righteousness is not to kill few, yet you would kill many—this cannot be called knowing kinds.”⁶⁷

Gōngshū Bān was convinced.

Our Master Mòzǐ said, “So, why not stop the attack?”

Gōngshū Bān said, “It’s not possible. I have already stated it to the king.”

Our Master Mòzǐ said, “Why not present me to the king?”

Gōngshū Bān said, “Agreed.” (50/1–7)

⁶² The capital of Chǔ.

⁶³ A polite greeting, similar to “What can I do for you?”

⁶⁴ Another name for Chǔ.

⁶⁵ “Knowledge” for the Mohists coincides with wisdom. Compare §§18.3, 19.4.

⁶⁶ “Loyalty” (*zhōng* 忠) also covers integrity.

⁶⁷ “Knowing kinds” is a technical term in early Chinese logic for distinguishing and responding to different kinds of things correctly and consistently. Mòzǐ is alluding to an analogical argument familiar from §17.1, §49.6, and other passages. Gōngshū knows well enough that the “little” crime of murdering one person is wrong, but doesn’t acknowledge that the “big” crime of attacking another state and killing its inhabitants is an even more serious wrong of the same kind. Failing to recognize that such large-scale cases are of the same kind as commonsense small-scale cases is failing to “know kinds.” Gōngshū is guilty of inconsistency in cognition and in conduct. See too §19.5.

50.2 Our Master Mòzǐ saw the king and said, “Now suppose there is a person here who sets aside his fine carriage, as his neighbor has a broken cart and he desires to steal it. He sets aside his embroidered finery, as his neighbor has a rough hemp coat and he desires to steal it. He sets aside his grain and meat, as his neighbor has some chaff and dregs and he desires to steal them. What kind of person is this?”

The King said, “Surely he is a kleptomaniac.”⁶⁸

Our Master Mòzǐ said, “The territory of Jīng is five thousand *lǐ* square; the territory of Sòng is five hundred *lǐ* square. This is like the relation between an elegant carriage and a broken cart. Jīng has Yún Mèng, full of rhinoceroses and milu deer,⁶⁹ while the Yángzǐ and Hàn rivers are the richest in the world in fish, tortoises, and crocodiles; Sòng is said to lack pheasants, rabbits, and foxes. This is like the relation between grain and meat and chaff and dregs. Jīng has tall pines, catalpa, camphor, and oak; Sòng has no tall trees. This is like the relation between embroidered finery and a rough hemp coat. Your subject takes the King’s officials’ attacking Sòng to be of the same kind as this.⁷⁰ I see the great King will surely injure righteousness to no gain.”

The King said, “Excellent! However, Gōngshū Bān has made the cloud-ladders for me. We must take Sòng.” (50/7–13)

50.3 Thereupon the King received Gōngshū Bān. Our Master Mòzǐ untied his belt to make a city wall and used sticks as machines.⁷¹ Gōngshū Bān tried nine different ways of setting up his machines to attack the city wall, and our Master Mòzǐ repelled him nine times. Gōngshū Bān’s attack machines were all used up, while our Master Mòzǐ had defenses to spare.

Gōngshū Bān yielded and said, “I know how to repel you, but I won’t state it.”

⁶⁸ Compare §46.19.

⁶⁹ Both were rare and exotic animals.

⁷⁰ To be of the same kind as the well-off person stealing his neighbor’s inferior cart, clothing, and food.

⁷¹ He improvised a model of a city wall and defense machines using his belt and some small sticks.

Our Master Mòzǐ also said, “I know how you would repel me, but I won’t state it.”

The King of Chǔ asked the reason.

Our Master Mòzǐ said, “Gōngshūzǐ’s intention is simply that he desires to kill me. If he kills me, no one can defend Sòng and he can attack. However, my disciple Qín Gǔlí and three hundred others are already equipped with my defense devices and await the Chǔ raiders on the walls of Sòng. Even if you kill me, you cannot cut them off.”

The King of Chǔ said, “Excellent! I request that we not attack Sòng.”
(50/13–18)

50.4 Our Master Mòzǐ returned home. As he passed Sòng, it rained. He sought shelter in the city gate, but the gatekeeper did not let him in. So it’s said, “Those who achieve order before the spirits, the masses of people don’t know their achievements; those who contend in the light, the masses of people know them.”⁷² (50/18–19)

⁷² A version of a proverb to the effect that the sage achieves good order with only the spirits as his witness, while fools contend in the open light, where all can see.