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Editor's Introduction: Mohist Studies

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Mozi 墨子 [476 or 480 BCE–390 or 420 BCE] was a famous thinker, educator, and military strategist of ancient China, and the founder and main representative of the Mohist school. During the pre-Qin period [before 221 BCE], the Mohist and Confucian schools coexisted as prominent areas of learning. During the Han period [206 BCE–220], the Hundred Schools of Thought were banned and only Confucianism was revered. The Mohist school was promptly dismantled and all but disappeared in the imperial era that followed. It would not be until two thousand years later at the end of the Qing dynasty [1616–1911] and the beginning of the Republic of China era [1912–1949] that figures like Sun Yirang 孫詒讓 [1848–1908] and Liang Qichao 梁啟超 [1873–1929] would rediscover Mozi and lead a revival in the study of Mohism.

Unlike Confucianism, which is intended to mainly serve the interests of the ruler, Mohism can be considered a kind of populist ideology. As a result, Mozi is often seen as a populist sage. Mozi is best known for advancing the concepts of “universal love” [*jian'ai* 兼愛], “exalting worthiness” [*shangxian* 尚賢], “condemning offensive warfare” [*feigong* 非攻] and “exalting unity” [*shang-tong* 尚同], all of which embodied his thinking on social development. In modern times, Mozi has been highly praised. Sun Yat-sen 孫中山 [1866–1925] praised Mozi as “the world’s premier advocate of equal and universal love”, while Mao Zedong 毛澤東 [1893–1976] described Mozi as “China’s Heraclitus”. Chen Duxiu 陳獨秀 [1879–1942], the early leader of the Communist Party of China, believed: “If Mohism had not been banned in the Qin and Han dynasties, or if the Hundred Schools of Thought had been allowed to continue to contend, then the late Eastern Zhou period would have been equivalent to that of Ancient Greece, and the history of China would be very different from what it is at present.”

Unlike the leaders of the other Hundred Schools of Thought, Mozi was a scientist and he made commendable achievements in natural sciences such as geometry, physics, and optics. He was also one of the pioneers of ancient

Chinese logic. The renowned historian of Chinese thought Yang Xiangkui 楊向奎 [1910–2000] once summarized Mozi's contributions thus: "Mozi's achievements in natural science are by no means inferior to the ancient Greek scientists and philosophers – they could even be considered superior to them. His achievements alone are equivalent to that of the whole of Greece." Although such a statement may be taken as hyperbole, it reflects the prominent position of Mozi in the history of ancient Chinese science and technology.

Since the 1980s, the revival of traditional culture has become central to China's cultural development and scholars have taken to the study of Mohism with renewed zeal. While exalting the virtues of Confucianism, an increasing number of researchers are turning their attention to the study of Mohist theory and a thousand-year-old body of learning, once lost to history, has been revitalized. Just as in the case of Confucianism, the creative transformation and innovative development of Mohist doctrine has become an important issue for the renaissance of traditional culture.

The articles included in this series showcase the depth and diversity of Mozi studies in contemporary Chinese academia. They are guided by two objectives. One is to highlight the modern value of Mohist culture, the other is to enact an epistemological interpretation of Mohist doctrine. Lee Hsien-Chung 李賢中 deployed the ancient wisdom of Mohism in the resolution of modern issues such as contemporary regional problems, world peace and environmental awareness, while promoting the integration of humanities, social science and natural science. Qin Yanshi 秦彥士 compared the propositions on war and peace held by Mozi and Immanuel Kant [1724–1804] to warn people of the dangers of ideology as religious and ethnic conflicts continue to intensify in recent times. Generally speaking, Mohism is regarded as utilitarian, while Confucianism is opposed to utilitarianism. Fang Xudong 方旭東 points out that although Confucianism is not utilitarian in the way Mohism is, both Confucianism and Mohism can be said to be consequentialist as they both take consequences as the basis for judging the moral value of actions. Through an analysis of the classic texts of Confucius and Mencius, the author came to the unique conclusion that the similarities between Confucianism and Mohism far outweigh their differences in terms of their view on righteousness and benefit [*yili* 義利]. Gao Huaping 高華平 conducted a comprehensive and systematic review of the relationship between Mohists and the pre-Qin philosophers from the perspective of academic criticism and the ideological confrontation among other pre-Qin scholars, thereby enriching our understanding of China's Axial Age. Ding Sixin 丁四新 and Wu Xiaoxin 吳曉欣 revealed the general attitudes of Republican scholars towards Confucianism

and the relationship between Confucianism and Mohism by examining their writings on the Mohist concept of *jian'ai*. Nie Tao 聶韜 and Wu Manyi 吳滿意 investigated the evolution of the concept of utilitarianism in the study of Mohist thought since the Republican era. Chu Lijuan 褚麗娟 demonstrated how the contrastive translations of *jian'ai* by the missionary-sinologists Joseph Edkins [1823–1905] and James Legge [1815–1897] around 1860 not only reveals differences in their understanding of the Chinese classics but also reflects a historical shift in the missionaries who came to China after the middle of the 19th century from amateur to professional sinologists. It is hoped that these papers can expand the scope of Mohist research, deepen scholarly understanding of Mohist thought and reveal the modern relevance of this ancient school of thought.

Translated by Carl Gene Fordham



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Consequentialism and the Possibility of a Confucian-Mohist Encounter

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Abstract

Mohism and Confucianism are usually characterized as utilitarian and anti-utilitarian, respectively. This article argues that although Confucians do not espouse the kind of utilitarianism found in the *Mozi*, both Confucianism and Mohism qualify as forms of consequentialism in emphasizing that the outcome of a given behavior or action constitutes the basis for determining whether the latter qualifies as morally good. Through an analysis of the classical texts of the *Analecets* and the *Mengzi*, I demonstrate that the similarities between the Confucian and Mohist perspectives on *yi* 義 and *li* 利 are much greater than their supposed differences, which have generally been taken for granted. Like Mohism, Confucianism upholds what we might call a “deliberated utilitarianism.”

Keywords

Chinese philosophy – Confucianism – consequentialism – Mohism

For a long time, Mohism and Confucianism have been seen as utilitarian and anti-utilitarian in orientation, respectively. As early as 1904, in a text called “The Teachings of Master Mo,” Liang Qichao 梁啟超 [1873–1929] compared the ideas of Mozi 墨子 [ca. 468–376 BCE] to the utilitarianism of Jeremy Bentham [1748–1832] and John Stuart Mill [1806–1873] and discerned a form of “pragmatism” or, more literally, a “doctrine of material benefit” [*shili zhuyi* 實利主義] in the ancient master’s thought. In his 1917 Columbia University PhD dissertation, titled “The Development of the Logical Method in Ancient

China,” Hu Shi 胡適 [1891–1962] used “utilitarianism” as a designation for the Mohist school. Likewise, Feng Youlan’s 馮友蘭 [1895–1990] 1923 PhD dissertation, “A Comparative Study of Life Ideals: The Way of Decrease and Increase with Interpretations and Illustrations from the Philosophies of the East and the West,” which was also completed at Columbia, contains a chapter titled “Utilitarianism: Mo Tzu.” In the first volume of his *History of Chinese Philosophy* [*Zhongguo zhexue shi* 中國哲學史] in 1930, Feng continued to use the term “utilitarianism” [*gongli zhuyi* 功利主義] to characterize the Mohist school. Western scholars such as Angus C. Graham [1919–1991] and Benjamin Schwartz [1916–1999] also saw Mohism as a form of utilitarianism.¹ That being said, there is certainly no lack of voices critical of the characterization of Mozi as a utilitarianist, in both Chinese and Western scholarship.² Although these critiques have consistently attracted a significant number of rebuttals, consequentialism has never been used as a more appropriate perspective on the *Mozi* 墨子. The main goal of this article is to explore the encounter between Confucianism and Mohism in terms of their approaches to the problem of consequentialism and involvement in these debates.

In my view, although it is clear that Confucianism does not espouse the kind of utilitarianism found in Mohism, both Confucianism and Mohism qualify as forms of consequentialism in emphasizing that the outcome of a given behavior or action constitutes the basis for determining whether the latter qualifies as morally good.³ As is generally known, the classical utilitarianism of Bentham and Mill are paradigmatic examples of consequentialism. Recognizing Mohism as utilitarian thus already implies seeing it as a form of consequentialism.⁴

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- 1 On the English-language scholarship concerning Mozi’s utilitarianism, see Nie Tao 聶韜, “Mozi ‘gongli zhuyi’ sixiang yanjiu de yingyu shuxie 墨子‘功利主義’思想研究的英語書寫 [English-Language Scholarship on Mozi’s ‘Utilitarianism’],” *Sichuan shifan daxue xuebao* 四川師範大學學報, no. 3 (2015).
 - 2 See, e.g., Hao Changchi 郝長擘, “Mozi shi gongli zhuyi zhe ma? Lun Mojia lunli sixiang de xiandai yiyi 墨子是功利主義者嗎? 論墨家倫理思想的現代意義 [Is Mozi a Utilitarian? On the Contemporary Significance of Mohist Ethics],” *Zhongguo zhexue shi* 中國哲學史, no. 1 (2005); Dennis M. Ahern, “Is Mo Tzu a Utilitarian?” *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 3, no. 2 (1976); David E. Soles, “Mo Tzu and the Foundation of Morality,” *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 26, no. 1 (1999); Daniel M. Johnson, “Mozi’s Moral Theory: Breaking the Hermetical Stalemate,” *Philosophy East and West* 61, no. 2 (2011).
 - 3 There are many different types of consequentialism, but its defining feature is usually understood as the idea that “certain normative properties depend only on consequences.” See Walter Sinnott-Armstrong’s entry in the online *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*: “Consequentialism,” last modified June 3, 2019, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/consequentialism/>.
 - 4 Chris Fraser claims that Mozi abides by “a loose yet sophisticated form of consequentialism” in his entry in the online *Stanford Encyclopedia*, “Mohism,” last modified September 22, 2020, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/mohism/#ethics/>.

As such, this article focuses on making clear that Confucian thought qualifies as consequentialist in nature as well.

I can easily imagine that characterizing Confucianism as a form of consequentialism provokes a sense of disbelief as well as downright opposition by some. Even people with only a modest understanding of Confucian thought immediately bring up the fact that “the Master rarely expressed his views on *li* 利 [benefit, profit, profitableness, advantage], *ming* 命 [mandate], and *ren* 仁 [humaneness],”⁵ of the idea that “the exemplary person understands *yi* 義 [rightness], whereas the petty person understands *li*”⁶ or of Mencius’s exclamation: “Why must the king speak of benefit? I have only [teachings concerning] humaneness and rightness”⁷ and many other similar statements. In effect, my article sets out to challenge this rather stereotypical image. Through an analysis of the classical texts of the *Analects* and the *Mengzi* 孟子, I show that the similarities between the Confucian and Mohist perspectives on *yi* and *li* are much greater than their supposed differences, which are usually taken for granted. The first section deals with the position of Confucius and the second with that of Mencius. In the conclusion, I discuss the perspective of Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 [ca. 179–104 BCE].

1 *Yi* and *Li* as Mutually Constitutive Terms: A Reexamination of Confucius’s Standpoint

In the passage “the Master rarely expressed his views on profit, the mandate, and humanness” (*Analects* 9.1) quoted earlier, the character *han* 罕 is generally understood as meaning “rarely” or “seldom.” The real crux in understanding this passage is how we interpret the word *li*. If we see *li* as referring to something negative, the fact that Confucius “rarely expressed his views” on this matter would imply that the Master preferred not to bring it up. This approach is not suitable for the context of the entire passage, however, because Confucius obviously did not consider “humaneness” a bad thing. In an attempt to arrive at an adequate interpretation, some scholars have framed the problem as one of punctuation. Wang Ruoxu 王若虛 [1174–1243], in *Resolution of Various Errors* [*Wumiu zhibian* 誤謬雜辨], and Shi Shengzu 史繩祖 [fl. 1241], in *Notes from My*

5 子罕言利與命與仁。 Translation, with modifications, taken from Edward Slingerland, *Confucius: Analects, with Selections from Traditional Commentaries* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2003), 86. – Trans.

6 Translation, with modifications, taken from Edward Slingerland, *Confucius: Analects, with Selections from Traditional Commentaries*, 35. – Trans.

7 Translation, with modifications, taken from Irene Bloom, trans., and Philip J. Ivanhoe, ed., *Mencius* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 1. – Trans.

Study [Xuezhai zhanbi 學齋占畢], both parse this sentence in the *Analects* as 子罕言利，與命，與仁，⁸ with *yu* 與 meaning “to praise” or “to commend” here (“the Master spoke appraisingly of the mandate and humaneness”). However, this reading fails to offer a convincing explanation for why Confucius would be inclined to “rarely speak of *li*.” In other words, it does not allow us to conclude that this reticence was the result of his disgust or disdain for “benefit” or “profit.” In fact, these attempts at repunctuation are quite unnecessary, because we already have adequate interpretations of the difficulty in question in some earlier annotations of the *Analects*. As Xing Bing 邢昺 [932–1010] writes:

Han means “rarely,” *yu* means “to attain.” *Li* refers to “the harmonizing of what is right.” *Ming* refers to the heavenly mandate. *Ren* is the highest form of conduct achievable. Because ordinary people are but rarely able to attain *li*, *ming*, and *ren*, Confucius did not often speak of these things.⁹

The crucial point in Xing’s interpretation is his gloss of *li* as referring to a “harmonizing of what is right” [*yi zhi he* 義之和], a phrase he takes from the *Book of Changes* [*Yijing* 易經]. This matches the positive connotations of *ming* and *ren* as things beyond the reach of ordinary people (“ordinary people are rarely able to attain them”), which Confucius would not be inclined to talk about lightly (he “rarely expressed his views” on these matters). Xing’s entire interpretation is straightforward and consistent.

Apart from the description of *li* as “a harmonizing of what is right,” the *Commentary on the Book of Changes* [*Yizhuan* 易傳] contains another passage (in the “Remarks on the Text [*Wenyan* 文言]”), according to which “bringing benefit to things is in accordance with rightness.”¹⁰ Xing establishes a connection between these two phrases in the *Book of Changes* by his reading of *li wu* 利物 as “bringing benefit to all things” or “bringing benefit to the myriad things” and his interpretation of *he yi* 和義 as “a harmonizing of what is right.”¹¹

8 Quoted in Yang Bojun 楊伯峻, *Lunyu yizhu* 論語譯注 [An Annotated Translation of the *Analects*] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2006), 99.

9 He Yan 何晏, annot., and Xing Bing 邢昺, comm., “Lunyu zhushu 論語注疏 [Annotations on the *Analects*],” in *Shisanjing zhushu* 十三經注疏 [Annotations and Commentaries on the Thirteen Classics], ed. Ruan Yuan 阮元 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1997), 2489.

10 Wang Bi 王弼, annot., and Kong Yingda 孔穎達, coll., “Zhouyi zhengyi 周易正義 [The Correct Meaning of the Books of Changes with Subcommentary],” in *Shisanjing zhushu*, 15.

11 He Yan and Xing Bing, “Lunyu zhushu,” 2489.

We note that the interpretations of the statement “originating and penetrating, beneficial/advantageous and firm” [*yuan heng li zhen* 元亨利貞]¹² offered for the hexagram *qian* 乾 in the “Remarks on the Text” is also invoked by the Duchess Mu Jiang 穆姜 in the *Zuo Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals* [*Zuozhuan* 左傳] (in the ninth year of Duke Xiang 襄公).¹³ According to the Qing dynasty scholar Liu Baonan 劉寶楠 [1791–1855], statements such as “profitable refers to the harmonizing of what is right” and “bringing benefit to things is in accordance with rightness” “are ancient maxims passed down by tradition, which is why I rely on them in my annotations”;¹⁴ and he quotes a significant number of other ancient texts in proving that the original meaning of *li* was “a harmonizing of what is right”:

In *Discourses of the Zhou*, for instance, we read: “speaking of rightness necessarily involves what is beneficial.” Wei Zhao comments: “Only if it brings benefit to human beings and all affairs can we speak of rightness.” This goes to show that the earliest meaning of the character *li* was “a harmonizing of what is right.”¹⁵

It is noteworthy that, apart from the passage in the *Discourses of the States* [*Guoyu* 國語] concerning the relation between *yi* and *li* quoted by Liu Baonan, we also find the sentence “benefit can keep rightness in check” in *Discourses of*

12 English translation of this section is taken from James Legge, trans., *The Book of Changes*, <https://ctext.org/book-of-changes/ens?searchu=%E5%85%B3%E4%BA%A8%E5%88%A9%E8%B4%9E/>.

13 Hong Liangji 洪亮吉, *Chunqiu zuozhuan gu* 春秋左傳詁 [*Interpretation of the Spring and Autumn Annals and the Zuo Commentary*], coll. Li Jiemin 李解民 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1987), 51.

14 Liu Baonan 劉寶楠, *Lunyu zhengyi* 論語正義 [*Correct Meaning of the Analects*], coll. Gao Liushui 高流水 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1990), 319.

15 Liu Baonan, *Lunyu zhengyi*, 319. Xu Shen 許慎 [ca. 58–148 BCE] says in the *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字 [*Explaining Graphs and Analyzing Characters*]: “*Li* 利 means ‘sharp’ [*xian* 銑]. When a knife is harmonized, it becomes sharp 刀和然後利. The character is composed of ‘knife’ [*dao* 刀] and a simplified form of the character *he* 和. The *Book of Changes* says that ‘*li* is the harmonizing of what is right.’” Duan Yucai 段玉裁 [1735–1815] notes: “When the *Shuowen jiezi* says that ‘when a knife is harmonized, it becomes sharp,’ this refers to the original meaning of *li*; the quotation from the *Book of Changes* is the derived meaning,” in *Shuowen jiezi zhu* 說文解字注 [*Annotated Edition of Explaining Graphs and Analyzing Characters*] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2013), 180. Regardless of what the original meaning of the character *li* 利 may have been, we can safely assume that, after the Han period [206 BCE–220], its meaning was always interpreted with reference to the passage in the *Book of Changes* [*Yizhuan* 易傳], in which it is identified as a “harmonizing of what is right.”

the Zhou.¹⁶ If the “Remarks on the Text” use the concept of *yi* to explain *li*, the *Discourses* take the opposite approach. These two historical documents indicate that *yi* and *li* were seen as mutually constitutive terms in ancient China.

With respect to the passage “the Master rarely expressed his views on profit, the mandate, and humanness,” it seems we have sufficient grounds for interpreting the meaning of the term *li* here on the basis of its mutually constitutive relation to *yi* as argued above. However, in another passage in the *Analects*, we find the Master claiming that “the exemplary person understands rightness, whereas the petty person understands benefit.”¹⁷ If we are correct in assuming that *yi* and *li* are mutually constitutive concepts, why then would Confucius use these terms to draw a normative distinction between “the exemplary person” [*junzi* 君子] and the “petty person” [*xiaoren* 小人]?

Liu Baonan was well aware of this problem and argued that Confucius drew this distinction in order to indicate the radically different ways in which an “exemplary” and “petty person” understand *li*. That is, the type of “benefit” on which Confucius “rarely expressed his views” is only superficially similar to the kind of “benefit” that “the petty person understands.” Liu’s close predecessor, Jiao Xun 焦循 [1763–1820], however, believed that the meaning of *li* is identical in both passages in the *Analects* but differs from how this concept is used in the phrase “benefit is the harmonizing of what is right” in the *Book of Changes*. In the *Book of Changes*, *li* means “bringing benefit to things,” whereas in the *Analects* it refers to “bringing benefit to oneself.”¹⁸ Jiao’s take on the idea that “the Master rarely expressed his views on *li*” stands apart from most other traditional interpretations. In his view, by the time of Confucius, people had come to understand “benefit” as “benefitting oneself.” By contrast, the Master wanted to return to the approach of the ancients and interpreted “rightness” as the proper form of “benefit” or, in other words, saw “benefit” as “rightness.” For Jiao Xun, this explains why Confucius usually tried to avoid speaking of *li*. Put differently, the “benefit” on which “the Master rarely expressed his views” refers to its usual sense as “benefitting oneself.” The problem with Jiao’s interpretation of this phrase, however, is how to reconcile it with the rest of the sentence in the *Analects* 9.1.

Comparatively speaking, the interpretation offered in older commentaries that refer to the phrase “benefit is the harmonizing of what is right” in the *Book*

16 Xu Yuangao 徐元誥, *Guoyu jijie* 國語集解 [Collected Commentaries on the Discourses of the States], coll. Wang Shumin 王樹民 and Shen Changyun 沈長雲 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2002), 88–89.

17 He Yan and Xing Bing, “Lunyu zhushu,” 2471.

18 Jiao Xun 焦循, *Mengzi zhengyi* 孟子正義 [The Correct Meaning of the Mengzi], coll. Shen Wenzhuo 沈文倬 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1987), 418.

of *Changes* is more convincing. That said, as indicated above, approaching *yi* and *li* as mutually constitutive terms does not lead to an adequate interpretation of the idea that “the exemplary person understands *yi*, whereas the petty person understands *li*” in the *Analects* 4.16. Regardless of how we understand the difference between these two types of persons, “understanding *yi*” and “understanding *li*” are clearly presented as opposites here. In sum, if *li* is understood as denoting something positive, why would there be anything unbecoming about a “petty person” being interested in and mastering (“understanding”) it?

We have to recognize that a certain tension is at work here: on the one hand, *li* is presented as having a positive value, but, on the other hand, it is also suggested that it should not be the center of attention. What, if any, fundamental difference is there between being preoccupied with and motivated by *yi* and *li*, respectively?

We find a suitable answer to this question in interpretations of the exclamation “why must the king speak of benefit” in the *Mengzi* offered by commentators such as Zhu Xi 朱熹 [1130–1200]. In the “Collected Commentaries on the *Analects* [*Lunyu jizhu* 論語集注],” Zhu does not follow the traditional interpretations of *li* and, instead, employs his usual conceptual distinction between heavenly principle [*tianli* 天理] and human desire [*renyu* 人欲] in commenting on the contrast between “understanding *yi*” and “understanding *li*”: “*yu* 喻 means ‘to understand.’ *Yi* means what is in accordance with heavenly principle. *Li* is what is desired by human emotions.”¹⁹

Zhu Xi’s “Collected Commentaries on the *Analects*” do not contain any specific comments on the meaning of the word *li* in the *Analects* 9.1 (“The Master rarely expressed his views,” etc.).²⁰ This makes it difficult for us to determine

19 Zhu Xi 朱熹, “*Lunyu jizhu* 論語集注 [Collected Commentaries on the *Analects*],” in *Sishu zhangju jizhu* 四書章句集注 [Section and Sentence Commentaries and Collected Annotations on the Four Books] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983), 73.

20 Zhu Xi’s interpretation of this section consists mainly of quotations from the work of the Cheng 程 brothers: “*Han* 罕 means ‘rarely.’ The Cheng brothers note: ‘Pursuing benefit brings harm to rightness. The profound principle of the mandate, the greatness of the way of humaneness, these things the Master rarely spoke of’” (Zhu Xi, “*Lunyu jizhu*,” 109). According to the interpretation offered by the Cheng brothers, the reason that Confucius rarely expressed his views on *ming* 命 and *ren* 仁 was the subtle or weighty nature of these topics, which do not lend themselves to off-the-cuff remarks. Their take on the Master’s reasons for rarely speaking of *li* differs from most traditional readings in claiming that Confucius believed that giving too much attention to “benefit” would hinder the pursuit of “rightness.” However, the Cheng brothers do not further elaborate on why this should be so. This problem would be adequately addressed only by Hu Hong 胡宏, as I discuss later in the main text. Interestingly, in his interpretation of why Confucius rarely

whether he believed that *li* has the same meaning in *Analects* 4.16 and 9.1. If, in both cases, *li* is read as referring to “what is desired by human emotions,” which would imply that “exemplary persons” desire it as well, why would Confucius claim that only “petty persons understand *li*”? In fact, one of Zhu Xi’s interlocutors already posed the following question to him: “The actions of an exemplary person surely do not involve a desire for what is not beneficial. Why, then, does the text only speak of petty persons as ‘understanding *li*’?” In his response, Zhu draws on the interpretation of Hu Hong 胡宏 [Hu Wufeng 胡五峰, 1102–1161]:

Master Hu has already treated this problem in great detail: “*Yi* is surely that by which *li* is gained. This is what the *Book of Changes* means when it says that ‘benefit is the harmonizing of what is right.’ However, when an action is undertaken for the sake of benefit, this will lead to the disastrous and irresistible urge to lay claim to more. When a person acts in pursuit of rightness, he can enjoy the benefits of rightness while steering clear of the harms brought on by seeking benefit. This is what is meant by Mengzi’s admonition to the King Hui of Liang.”²¹

Needless to say, the admonition mentioned here is “why must the king speak of benefit? I have only [teachings concerning] humaneness and rightness,” a passage that we examine in the next section. For now, let us first try to sum up our findings concerning the understanding of *yi* and *li* in the *Analects*.

As the preceding discussion of the relevant passages in the *Analects* makes clear, the fact that Confucius “rarely expressed his views on benefit” should not be taken as meaning that he felt disgust or disdain for the idea of *li* and was thus reluctant to mention it. Rather, because “benefit,” “advantage,” and “profitableness” as a “harmonizing of what is right,” like the concepts of *ming* and *ren*, are beyond the reach of ordinary people, he would not have been inclined to talk about it to just anybody. Interpreting *li* in the sentence “an exemplary person understands rightness, whereas a petty person understands benefit” as “bringing benefit to oneself” and thus as something opposed to *yi* is not consistent with the notion of *li* in *Analects* 9.1. By contrast, the assumption that the use of *li* in both passages is consistent and that this term also has a positive

spoke of “benefit,” Liu Baonan 劉寶楠 seems to adopt the Cheng brothers’ description of the Master’s reason for rarely speaking of *ming*: “The Master rarely spoke of benefit because of the profoundness of its principle” (Liu Baonan, *Lunyu zhengyi*, 320).

21 Zhu Xi 朱熹, “Lunyu huowen 論語或問 [Questions about the Analects],” in *Zhu zi quanshu* 朱子全書 [*The Complete Works of Zhu Xi*] (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe; Hefei: Anhui jiaoyu chubanshe, 2002), 6:694.

connotation in 4.16 (“understanding benefit”) is reinforced in the *Mengzi* and allows us to arrive at a consistent interpretation of why Confucius sees the distinction between “understanding rightness” and “understanding benefit” as overlapping with the difference between an “exemplary person” and a “petty person.” Another concrete finding from our reading of these two chapters in the *Analects* is the importance of the ideas that “benefit is the harmonizing of what is right” and “bringing benefit to things is in accordance with rightness” in the “Remarks on the Text.” Given the fact that the authorship of this and the other nine commentaries on the *Book of Changes* is attributed to Confucius, we cannot restrict ourselves to consulting only the *Analects* while ignoring the “Remarks on the Text” in studying the Master’s views on *yi* and *li*.²²

Focusing on the mutually constitutive nature of the terms *yi* and *li* evidenced in the “Remarks on the Text” can be seen as consistent with Mozi’s idea that “rightness can bring benefit to human beings.” As we read in Sun Yirang’s 孫詒讓 [1848–1908] edition of the text of the *Mozi*:

Master Mozi said: “He Shi’s jade, Marquis Sui’s pearl, and the nine tripods [*ding*] are what the feudal lords spoke of as precious treasures. But do they enrich the country, make the people numerous, bring order to government, and bring peace to the nation? I say they do not. Something is spoken of as being valued as an excellent treasure because it can benefit the people. But He Shi’s jade, Marquis Sui’s pearl, and the nine tripods do

22 Needless to say, apart from the commentaries on the *Book of Changes*, further study of Confucius’s view on these concepts would require us to take additional classical texts into account. In the *Zuo Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals* [*Zuozhuan* 左傳] (in the second year of Duke Cheng 成公), for instance, Confucius made the following important statement: “Not long thereafter, the leaders of Wei 卫 rewarded Zhongshu Yuxi 仲叔于奚 with settlements. He declined and requested instead curved frames for suspending musical instruments and the use of martingales of silken cords when he visited court. His requests were granted. Confucius heard of this and said, ‘What a pity! It would have been better to give him many settlements. It is precisely ritual objects and names that cannot be granted to others, for these are the things by which a ruler governs. The right names are for bringing forth trust; trust is for guarding ritual objects; ritual objects are for embodying ritual propriety; ritual propriety is for carrying out rightness; *rightness is for bringing benefit; benefit is for governing the people*. These are the great principles of government. If these things are granted to others, it amounts to handing over government to others. Once the government is gone, then domain and patrimony follow, and the process cannot be stopped” (Du Yu 杜預, annot., and Kong Yingda 孔穎達, comm., “Chunqiu zuozhuan zhengyi 春秋左傳正義 [The Correct Meaning of the Zuo Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals],” in *Shisan jing zhushu*, 1893–94). Translation, with modifications, taken from Stephen Durrant, Wai-ye Li, and David Schaberg, trans., *Zuo Tradition: Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2016), 712–13, emphasis added. – Trans.

not benefit people, so, in terms of the world, they are not excellent treasures. Now, if rightness is used in governing the country, the people will certainly be numerous, government will certainly be well ordered, and the nation will certainly be at peace. That which is said to be valued as an excellent treasure is that which benefits the people. And rightness is of benefit to the people. Therefore, I say that righteousness is the world's most excellent treasure."²³

2 “Exchanging Mutual Benefit”: Reassessing the Concepts of *Yi* and *Li* in the *Mengzi*

Because Mengzi consistently “repudiated Yang Zhu and Mozi,” most people automatically assume that if Mozi is a utilitarian, Mengzi must be opposed to utilitarianism. After all, the *Mengzi* opens with the famous episode in which the Confucian thinker is admonishing king Hui of Liang 梁惠王 [r. 370–319 BCE] for “speaking of benefit.” However, things are not quite that simple. Let us begin by looking at the original text:

Mencius met with King Hui of Liang. The king said, “Venerable sir, you have not considered a thousand *li* too far to come. Surely you have some means to benefit our state?” Mencius replied: “Why must the king speak of benefit? I have only [teachings concerning] humaneness and rightness. If the king says, ‘How can I bring benefit my state?’ the officers will say, ‘How can I bring benefit to my house?’ and the gentlemen and the common people will say, ‘How can I bring benefit to myself?’ Those above and those below will compete with one another for benefit, and the state will be imperiled. One who murders the ruler over a state of ten thousand chariots surely will be from a house of a thousand chariots; one who murders the ruler over a state of a thousand chariots surely will be from a house of a hundred chariots. A share of a thousand in ten thousand or a hundred in a thousand is hardly negligible; yet, when rightness is subordinated to benefit the urge to lay claim to more becomes irresistible. It has never happened that one given to humaneness abandons his

23 Sun Yirang 孫詒讓, *Mozijiang* 墨子閒詁 [Annotations to the Mozi], coll. Sun Qizhi 孫啓治 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2001), 429–30. Translation, with modifications, taken from Ian Johnston, trans., *The Mozi: A Complete Translation* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2010), 647–49. – Trans.

parents or that one given to rightness subordinates the interests of his ruler. Let the king speak only of humaneness and rightness. What need has he to speak of benefit?"²⁴

Many people have taken this celebrated passage as proof of Mengzi's anti-utilitarian stance. What Mengzi is opposing here, however, is "speaking of benefit," not *li* itself. When the text says that "it has never happened that one given to humaneness abandons his parents or that one given to rightness subordinates the interests of his lord," it is speaking of the "benefits" stemming from "humaneness and rightness." Zhu Xi, for one, believes that "what is called humaneness and rightness here are surely beneficial."²⁵ The famous early Song Dynasty neo-Confucian philosophers, the Cheng brothers (程顥 1032–1085, 程頤 1033–1107), for their part, argue that what Mengzi opposes is "having a heart that is solely devoted to benefit":

It is not the case that an exemplary person does not desire benefit or advantage but that having a heart solely devoted to benefit is harmful. If one solely pursues humaneness and rightness without seeking benefit, this will still be most beneficial. In the time of Mengzi, the people in the world were exclusively preoccupied with seeking benefit and had forgotten about humaneness and rightness. This is why he only talked about humaneness and rightness and not about benefit [as such]. In doing so, he sought for a fundamental solution to the pernicious practices [resulting from the pursuit of benefit]. This is what the mind of a sage must be like.²⁶

In claiming that "it is not the case that an exemplary person does not desire benefit," the Cheng brothers clearly affirm the universal human need to pursue certain "benefits," regardless of whether we are dealing with "exemplary" or "petty persons." Zhu Xi's take on the meaning of *li* in the *Analects* 4.16 as referring to "what human emotions desire" is fully consistent with the interpretation of the Cheng brothers. Because *li* is a positive good, people will pursue ("desire") it regardless of their moral stature. The difference between "exemplary" and "petty persons" consists of the methods employed in this pursuit and their varying degrees of success: whereas the former "does not pursue benefit but always arrives at what is beneficial," the latter are "exclusively preoccupied with seeking benefit," which should be condemned as "harmful." The same approach is found in the work of Hu Hong:

24 Translation, with modifications, taken from Bloom and Ivanhoe, *Mencius*, 1 – Trans.

25 Bloom and Ivanhoe, *Mencius*, 1 – Trans.

26 Quoted in Zhu Xi, "Lunyu jizhu," 202.

When [an exemplary person] acts in pursuit of rightness, he can enjoy the benefits of rightness while steering clear of the harms brought on by seeking benefit. when an action is undertaken for the sake of benefit, this will lead to the disastrous and irresistible urge to lay claim to more.

For Zhu Xi as well, “If [an exemplary person] abides by heavenly principle, not actively pursuing benefit will naturally prove to beneficial. If [a petty person] delivers himself over to human desires, his search for what is beneficial will be in vain and can only end up bringing harm.”²⁷

As such, according to the interpretations offered by these Song dynasty [960–1279] Confucians, the distinction between “exemplary” and “petty” persons does not consist of whether *li* is treated as a desirable good but, rather, of the different methods and results that characterize their pursuit of “benefit.” We could say that, whereas a “petty person” pursues “benefit” in a linear fashion, an “exemplary person” does so in a more roundabout and indirect manner. As a result, the former is harmed by “benefit,” whereas the latter is not. A “petty person’s” pursuit of “benefit” is doomed to failure, while the “exemplary person” will succeed precisely by not setting his mind on “benefit.” Perhaps it is this strange twist in the human pursuit of “benefit” that Mengzi is trying to describe to King Hui of Liang, regardless of what his deeper intentions might have been.

What, we might ask, should the king do if Mengzi manages to convince him? Clearly, there is no need for him to abandon his pursuit of “benefit.” Rather, he simply has to change and refine his strategy for doing so: the king has to stop openly using the word *li* as a slogan (“speaking of benefit,” “asking for benefit”) and, instead, learn how to speak the language of “humanness and rightness” (“speak of humaneness and rightness”). If we could call the old King Hui a “naïve utilitarian,” this new King Hui would have changed into a “shrewd or deliberating utilitarian.”

We have no way of knowing what was really in Mengzi’s mind, but the speech he delivers before the king seems to boil down to saying: As the ruler of a state, you have to ensure that there is an atmosphere conducive to practicing humaneness and rightness among your subjects. If your subjects become people who practice humaneness and rightness, this will bring you endless benefits. It is noteworthy that Mengzi in no way demands that the king himself becomes a humane and righteous person. Rather, he is simply describing the simple fact that “it has never happened that one given to rightness subordinates the interests of his ruler.” Translated into more contemporary jargon, this

27 Zhu Xi 朱熹, “Mengzi jizhu 孟子集注 [Collected Commentaries on the *Mengzi*],” in *Sishu zhangju jizhu*, 202.

means that humane and righteous subjects are a reliable source of advantage for the ruler. That said, it is clear from other passages in the text that Mengzi also wanted rulers to practice a form of “humane government” [*renzheng* 仁政] and thereby bring benefit to his people. In the following passages for example, we read:

If the king bestows humane government on the people, reduces punishment, and lightens taxes, causing the plowing to be deep and the weeding thorough, the strong will be able to use their leisure time to cultivate filiality and brotherliness. In the home they will serve their fathers and brothers; outside, they will serve their elders and superiors. They can then be made to take up sticks and overcome the strong armor and the sharp weapons of Qin and Chu.... With a person of humanity in a position of authority, how can entrapment of the people be allowed to occur? Therefore, an enlightened ruler will regulate the people’s livelihood so as to ensure that, above, they have enough to serve their parents, and, below, they have enough to support their wives and children. In years of prosperity, they always have enough to eat; in years of dearth, they are able to escape starvation. Only then does he urge the people toward goodness; accordingly, they find it easy to comply.²⁸

Although it is true that Mengzi describes the advantages of “humane government” from the perspective of the king, the text makes it clear that the people will benefit considerably from such a form of government, which involves lighter punishment, lower taxes, an increase in production that will allow people to care for their parents, spouse, and children, sufficient food and clothing in years of prosperity, no risk of starvation in years of dearth, and so on.

On the one hand, humane and righteous subjects are beneficial to the ruler (king), but, on the other hand, a king who practices humane government will bring great benefits to his people. Using a passage in the *Mozi*, we could say that the *Mengzi* conceives of the relation between ruler and subjects as one of “universal mutual love and the exchange of mutual benefit” [*jian xiang'ai, jiao xiangli* 兼相愛，交相利].²⁹ This interdependent relation becomes abundantly clear in Mengzi’s description of the “shared enjoyment” [*tongle* 同乐] of the ruler and the ruled:

With your permission, I would like to speak to you about music. Now suppose the king is making music here. Hearing the echoes of the king’s bells

28 Translation taken from Bloom and Ivanhoe, *Mencius*, 5 and 11. – Trans.

29 Translation taken from Ian Johnston, *The Mozi: A Complete Translation*, 139. – Trans.

and drums and the sounds of his pipes and flutes, the people, with aching heads and furrowed brows, all ask one another, “Why should our king’s fondness for music make life so hard for us? Fathers and sons cannot see one another; older and younger brothers, wives and children are separated and scattered.” Now suppose the king is going hunting. Hearing the sounds of the king’s chariots and horses and seeing the beauty of the plumage and banners, the people, with aching heads and furrowed brows, all ask one another, “Why should our king’s fondness for hunting make life so hard for us? Fathers and sons cannot see one another; older and younger brothers, wives and children are separated and scattered.” This is solely because he does not share his enjoyment with the people. Now suppose the king is making music here. Hearing the echoes of the king’s bells and drums and the sounds of his pipes and flutes, the people, joyfully and with delighted countenances, all tell one another, “Our king must be quite free of illness, for if he were ill, how would he be able to make music?” Now suppose the king is going hunting here. Hearing the sounds of the king’s carriages and horses and seeing the beauty of the plumage and banners, the people, joyfully and with delighted countenances, all tell one another, “Our king must be quite free of illness, for if he were ill, how would he be able to go hunting?” This is solely because he shares his enjoyment with the people. Now, if Your Majesty simply will share your enjoyment with the people, you shall be a true king.... When one takes pleasure in the people’s pleasures, the people will also take pleasure in one’s pleasures, and when one sorrows over the people’s sorrows, they will also sorrow over one’s sorrows. One who delights in what the world delights in and sorrows over what the world sorrows over – such a one never has failed to become a true king.³⁰

If the king succeeds in “sharing his enjoyment” with the (common) people, they will wish him well. Failing to do so will cause the people to resent him or even bear him ill will. “Shared enjoyment” will result in long and stable rule, whereas, in the worst case, resentment can lead to rebellion. Although Mengzi’s initial focus is encouraging the king to practice humane government and the “kingly way” [*wangdao* 王道], the logic of “tit-for-tat” he describes is quite close to that of Mozi:

If a person loves others then others must, as a result, love that person. If a person benefits others then others must, as a result, benefit that person.

³⁰ Translation taken from Bloom and Ivanhoe, *Mencius*, 13–14 and 17. – Trans.

If a person hates others then others must, as a result, hate that person. If a person harms others then others must, as a result, harm that person.³¹

In sum, the opening chapter of the *Mengzi* does not call upon us to abandon all interest in “benefit” but, rather, lets us in on a “secret”: if individual human beings want to gain certain benefits or advantages, they would do well to follow a more indirect and roundabout strategy and begin with the practice of humaneness and rightness, so that these benefits will come to us naturally. In terms of the relation between ruler and subject, the *Mengzi* claims that the ruler of a state will profit from the humaneness and rightness of his subjects, while the latter will in turn benefit from the ruler’s practice of humane government. In his keen awareness of the principle of “the exchange of mutual benefit,” Mengzi does not lag behind Mozi.

3 Conclusion

The main conclusion we can draw from analyzing the concepts of *yi* and *li* in the *Analects* and the *Mengzi* on the basis of a combined reading of several historical (sub)commentaries is radically different from the prevalent view. Based on the foregoing, we can see that neither Confucius nor Mencius is suspicious of the human pursuit of “benefit”; indeed, both affirm it as having a positive value. Moreover, they both use the concept of “benefit” in their definition of “rightness.” On the surface, it might appear as if Confucius and Mencius primarily emphasize humaneness and rightness, but, on closer inspection, we find that the ideas of humanness, rightness, and “humane government” are defined primarily in terms of “benefit.” To a certain extent, the reason that later Confucians appear to have adopted a more anti-utilitarian stance traces back to the influence of Dong Zhongshu and his notion that one should “rectify one’s sense of what is right without calculating benefit and clarify the way without striving for success.” This formulation has its origin in the biography of Dong in Ban Gu’s 班固 [32–92] *History of the Former Han* [*Hanshu* 漢書], which says that “a humane person rectifies his sense of what is right without calculating benefit and clarifies the way without striving for success.”³² These phrases appear in a slightly different form in the *Luxuriant Gems of the Spring and Autumn* [*Chunqiu fanlu* 春秋繁露]: “a humane person is one

31 Translation taken from Johnston, *The Mozi*, 141. – Trans.

32 Ban Gu 班固, *Hanshu* 漢書 [*History of the Former Han*], annot. Yan Shigu 顏師古 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1962), 2524.

who corrects the way but does not calculate what benefits that will bring him; adheres to principles without hurrying after success.”³³ As some commentators have already pointed out, what the *History of the Former Han* calls “not striving for success [at all]” means something quite different from “not hurrying after success” in the *Luxuriant Gems*, and Dong’s original meaning is best reflected by the latter.³⁴ Moreover, in my view, what is much more important to note here is the fact that Dong uses the ideas of “not calculating benefits” and “not striving (or hurrying) after success” to describe a “humane person.” In other words, Dong can be seen as building on Confucius’s notion that “a humane person understands rightness, whereas a petty person understands benefit.” At the same time, he also understood something about the “strange phenomenon” in the human pursuit of benefit to which Mengzi draws our attention. Like Menzi, Dong contrasts the different ways in which exemplary persons (e.g., Confucius’s disciples Yuan Xian 原憲, Zeng Shen 曾參, and Min Sun 閔損) and petty persons (“the common people” [*xiaomin* 小民]) pursue benefit and their varying degrees of success. In Dong’s view, common people “forget rightness and deliver themselves over to benefit” and thus bring disaster upon themselves:

In giving birth to people, Heaven sustains them by giving birth to rightness and benefits: Material benefits to nourish their bodies; righteous principles to nourish their hearts. If the heart does not obtain righteous principles, it cannot be joyful; if the body does not obtain material benefits, it cannot be secure. Righteous principles are the heart’s nourishment; material benefits are the body’s nourishment. With regard to the body, nothing is more exalted than the heart. With regard to nurture, nothing is more important than righteous principles, more important than material benefits. How do we know this to be true? When people amply possess rightness but sorely lack benefits, though poor and humble, they still may bring honor to their conduct, thereby cherishing their persons and rejoicing in life. Those like Yuan Xian, Zeng Shen, and Min Sun exemplify this. When people amply possess material benefits but utterly lack righteous principles, though exceedingly wealthy, they are insulted and despised.

33 Su Yu 蘇輿, *Chunqiu fanlu yizheng* 春秋繁露義證 [Verified Meaning of the Luxuriant Gems of the Spring and Autumn], coll. Zhong Zhe 鐘哲 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2015), 262. Translation, with modifications, taken from Sarah A. Queen and John S. Major, trans. and ed., *Luxuriant Gems of the Spring and Autumn* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 328. – Trans.

34 See Li Zehou 李澤厚, *Zhongguo gudai sixiang shi lun* 中國古代思想史論 [Essays on the History of Ancient Chinese Thought] (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1985), 151.

If their misdeeds are excessive, their misfortunes are serious. If they are not executed for their crimes, they [nevertheless] are struck down by an early death. They can neither rejoice in life nor live out their years. People who are punished with execution or die prematurely exemplify this. Now those who possess righteous principles, although poor, are able to find joy in themselves, but those who utterly lack righteous principles, although wealthy, are not able to preserve themselves. I rely on such examples to substantiate the claim that for nourishing and sustaining the people, righteous principles are more important than material benefits and more beneficial than wealth. But [ordinary] people are incapable of knowing this, so they constantly get it backward; they all forget righteous principles and deliver themselves over to material benefits, disregard inherent principles and follow evil ways, thereby harming themselves and endangering their families. It is not that they personally intend to be disloyal [to their families] but that this is a matter their knowledge is incapable of understanding.³⁵

For Dong Zhongshu, the problem with “common people” is the fact that they are ignorant (“their knowledge is incapable of understanding”) and have a very narrow understanding of “benefit,” namely material benefit (goods and riches). They remain ignorant of spiritual benefits, including rightness as “the heart’s nourishment.” What Dong leaves unexplained here is why “petty persons” bring disaster upon themselves by pursuing material benefit. In effect, this question is already adequately answered in Mengzi’s description of the “irresistible urge to lay claim to more” in his admonitions to King Hui. As we learn from the *Mengzi*, a rational utilitarianist has to commit to what the *Mozi* calls “the exchange of mutual benefit,” instead of blindly pursuing one’s own limited interest as a “petty person” or “naïve utilitarianist” would do. Confucianism and Mohism both reject such a “naïve utilitarianism” and uphold a kind of “deliberated utilitarianism.”

Translated by Ady Van den Stock

35 Su Yu, *Chunqiu fanlu yizheng*, 257–58. Translation taken from Queen and Major, *Luxuriant Gems*, 324–25. – Trans.

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Interpretations of Mohism’s “Impartial Love” in the Republic of China: A Comparative Approach to Confucianism and Mohism

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Abstract

Since the reign of Qianlong and Jiaqing in the Qing dynasty, there have been signs of a resurgence of interest in Mohism. Intellectuals became particularly invested in Mozi’s teachings during the period of the Republic of China. “Impartial love,” the notion of equity advocated by Mozi, received the most attention. At the time, most discussions primarily attempted to respond to Mencius’s criticism of Mozi’s doctrine. Some scholars stressed Mohism’s high regard for filial piety and demonstrated persuasively that the concept of impartial love did not closely correspond to Mencius’s labelling of it as “disregarding one’s father.” Other scholars drew a distinction between Mozi and his disciples and identified only the latter as deserving of Mencius’s criticism. Some thinkers affirmed impartial love’s practical significance and saw it as a significant tool for condemning the autocracy and saving the country from imminent downfall. Others vehemently denounced the principle’s impracticability. A close look at these different trends can provide us with a better understanding of the different attitudes of intellectuals in the period of the Republic of China regarding Confucianism and the relationship between Confucianism and Mohism.

Keywords

Confucianism and Mohism – impartial love – intellectual history in the Republic of China – Mencius – Mohism

Confucianism and Mohism were both established and became renowned schools of thought in the period that preceded the Qin dynasty [221–206 BCE]. Because Mencius [ca. 372–289 BCE] believed that he should preserve Confucian tradition, he discredited the precept of “impartial love” [*jian'ai* 兼愛] promoted by the Mohists by accusing Mozi 墨子 [ca. 468–376 BCE] of disrespecting his own father and by describing the behavior he advocated as “bestial.” In the *History of the Former Han Dynasty* [*Han shu* 漢書], it is written that, since the Western Han [206 BCE–25], “The teachings of the Hundred Schools of Thought had been banned and the teachings of the Six Classics [*Liu jing* 六經] alone were to be praised and carried forward.”¹ From then on, the influence of Mohism declined, and Mencius’s labelling of impartial love as disregarding filial piety and as bestial was impressed upon the erudite circles for centuries afterward. Although some scholars, such as Han Yu 韓愈 [768–824], Li Zhi 李贄 [1527–1602], and Wang Zhong 汪中 [1745–1794], argued in favor of Mohism’s impartial love, none of them could break through the conceptual conventions of Confucian orthodoxy.² Only

1 Ban Gu 班固, *Han shu* 漢書 [*History of the Former Han Dynasty*], annot. Yan Shigu 顏師古 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1962), 212.

2 Han Yu wrote: “Confucius’s love for the people knew no bounds and while he sought to be close to those who were exemplary in their benevolence [*ren* 仁], he also regarded boundless generosity when helping those in needs as a trait of the noblest of character. Is that not what impartial love is?” In highlighting similarities between the Confucian and Mohist schools, Han Yu attempted to defend Mohism and finally concluded: “Confucius needed Mozi and Mozi needed Confucius.” See Han Yu 韓愈, “Du Mozi 讀墨子 [A Critique of Mozi],” in *Han Yu quanji* 韓愈全集 [*The Collected Works of Han Yu*], ed. Qian Zhonglian 錢仲聯 and Ma Maoyuan 馬茂元 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1997), 129. Li Zhi commented: “Impartial love is what we call mutual love. To instruct people to love each other mutually, how can that be considered as against the ideal of benevolence?” See Li Zhi 李贄, “Mozi pi xuan 墨子批選 [Selected Criticisms of Mozi],” in *Mozi daquan* 墨子大全 [*A Comprehensive Anthology of Writings on Mozi*], ed. Ren Jiyu 任繼愈 and Li Guangxing 李廣星 (Beijing: Beijing tushuguan chubanshe, 2004), 6:556. Wang Zhong wrote: “Mozi is using the precept of impartial love to encourage all sons under Heaven to revere their fathers with filial piety and yet, he is being described as someone who disregards his father. This truly is unfair.” See Sun Yirang 孫詒讓, *Mozi jianqu* 墨子間詁 [*Annotations on Mozi*], annot. Sun Qizhi 孫啟治 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2001), 670.

during the Republic of China [1912–1949], when Western academic trends increasingly spread through the country and the corruption of the traditional Confucian system was laid bare, did Mohism's impartial love and Mencius's attacks on it become a topic of interest again.

According to Liang Qichao 梁啟超 [1873–1929], "The Mohist system of thought may have had ten guiding principles, but in reality, it emerged and developed from one fundamental notion alone: the concept of impartial love."³ Chen Guyuan 陳顧遠 [1896–1981] remarked: "At the heart of Mozi's political philosophy is the doctrine of impartial love."⁴ Yang Kuan 楊寬 [1914–2005] was a proponent of the same idea: "The key to Mohism is the concept of impartial love."⁵ During the period of the Republic of China, renewed interest in Mozi's central doctrine led to passionate debates among intellectuals.

This article centers on discussions of Mozi's impartial love and identifies four groups of intellectuals based on their divergent views and interpretations. Intellectuals in the first two groups have in common that they focused on Mencius's criticism. However, the first group believed that impartial love did not amount to disregarding one's father and rejected Mencius's argument, declaring it unfair. Intellectuals in the second group tended to agree with Mencius, yet saw a clear difference between Mozi and his disciples. These intellectuals thought that the Mohist disciples deserved Mencius's criticism but approved of the original meaning and intention of the concept of impartial love. The third and fourth groups of intellectuals were mainly concerned with the actual practicability of Mozi's impartial love. Thinkers in the third group stressed the practical significance of the concept and, more specifically, how it could be used in the context of their current undertaking, that is, the introduction of Western learning to Chinese society and taking down feudal autocracy. Intellectuals in the fourth group approached the topic from an all together different perspective and invalidated Mozi's impartial love, regarding it as completely impracticable.

3 Liang Qichao 梁啟超, "Mozi xue'an 墨子學案 [The Life and Thought of Mozi]," in *Yinbing shi heji: Zhuangzi 飲冰室合集·專集 [Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker's Studio: The Special Collection]* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1989), 39:8.

4 Chen Guyuan 陳顧遠, "Mozi zhengzhi zhaxue 墨子政治哲學 [The Political Philosophy of Mozi]," in *Mozi daquan*, 38:486.

5 Yang Kuan 楊寬, "Moxue fenqi yanjiu 墨學分期研究 [The Study of Mohism by Periods]," *Xue heng 學衡* 79 (1933): 32.

1 Impartial Love and Filial Love as Compatible Doctrines

When Mencius attacked the Mohist teaching of impartial love for its being unfilial, what he was fundamentally against was the proposition that other people's and one's own parents deserve the same amount of consideration. According to Mencius, this proposition disregarded the special status of fathers in Confucian ethics. Yet, during the period of the Republic of China, scholars pointed out that Mozi had not once denied the particular respect and care that children owe their parents and that, in fact, he did acknowledge the special social status of one's father. In the eyes of these intellectuals, Mencius's criticism appeared ill-founded. The reasoning of scholars such as Zhang Taiyan 章太炎 [1869–1936], Wu Leichuan 吳雷川 [1870–1944], Wang Zhixin 王治心 [1881–1968], Wu Feibai 伍非百 [1890–1965], Chen Guyuan, and Lang Qingxiao 郎擎霄 [b. 1903] may have differed to some degree, but their intention was basically the same: they all sought to speak in favor of the Mohist teaching of impartial love.

Zhang Taiyan's perspective on the topic of impartial love evolved over the years. Relatively early in the Republic of China, he turned his attention to the study of Mohist texts. He remarked at this point that

To indulge in defaming Mozi's impartial love, to call it "an utter disregard of one's father," the expression of such absurd opinions is not only characteristic of the youngest scholars still lacking in insight and experience, but it is also a statement that benevolent and exemplary people [*junzi* 君子] would not be able to take seriously, since it fails to grasp impartial love's real meaning.... Mohism attaches importance to both the patriarchal clan system and the worship of one's ancestors and sharply distinguishes between the ranks of the father and the son. If one advocates for the land under Heaven to be governed based on the rules of filial piety, how can we accuse this person of "failing one's father"?⁶

This opinion, which Zhang expressed in the first block-printed edition of *Words of Urgency* [*Qiu shu* 愬書], reappeared in the second and revised edition of *Words of Urgency* and in *Revised Views* [*Jian lun* 檢論] (the renamed and revised edition of *Words of Urgency*), even though Zhang's position by

6 Zhang Taiyan 章太炎, *Zhang Taiyan quanji* 章太炎全集 [*The Collected Works of Zhang Taiyan*] (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 2014), 7–8.

then was more nuanced. In order to counter Mencius's accusations, Zhang referred to Mohism's sharp distinction between father and son and its advocacy of filial piety as a fundamental rule of governance. However, Zhang did not always hold steadily to his views. At times, his conviction also seemed to waver, and he almost agreed with Mencius. In his essay on "The Origins of Mohism [*Yuan Mo* 原墨]," which appeared in *Revised Views*, he declared: "Impartial love is the Way to be followed by a ruler in order to govern the country and ensure peace and stability. It is not a duty upon which common scholars and people are meant to conduct their actions."⁷ Mohism's impartial love was to be considered "the Way of the ruler" [*renzhu zhi dao* 人主之道] and not a rule of conduct to be put into practice by either the cultured or the ordinary. In "A Few Words about the Classical Schools [*Zhuzi lüeshuo* 諸子略說]," Zhang also seemed to appreciate Mencius's argument to a certain extent, writing: "Impartial love is a duty to be assumed by the ruler of a country. Mozi himself was in no position to blindly implement this principle and that is why Mencius denounced his lack of consideration for filial piety."⁸ In Zhang's view, as a concept, impartial love was not problematic in itself; yet it remained a responsibility that could be assumed only by the supreme leader of a country. In other words, Zhang did not believe that Mencius had aimed to invalidate the impartial love doctrine completely. In his opinion, Mencius's concern had more to do with Mozi's behavior as an individual. Zhang Taiyan's opinion progressively changed from his defense of impartial love in the block-printed edition and the revised edition of *Words of Urgency* and in *Revised Views* and then, in "A Few Words about the Classical Schools," appeared to agree with Mencius's argument. In his later writings, Zhang went so far as to adopt the same position as Mencius, and he attempted to defend the Confucian master's views. This shift reflects, first, an evolution in Zhang's grasp of the concept of impartial love and, second, his changing attitude toward Confucianism and the study of Confucian classics. Zhang opposed Confucianism's standing as the sole orthodoxy to be revered, and he strove for an equal appreciation of all the classical schools of thought and their precepts. This is why, in both editions of *Words of Urgency*, a piece titled "Confucianism and Mohism [*Ru Mo* 儒墨]" appeared, in which Zhang considered both schools of thought equally. In fact, in "The Study

7 Zhang Taiyan, *Zhang Taiyan quanji*, 441.

8 Zhang Taiyan, *Zhang Taiyan quanji: Yanjiang ji* 章太炎全集·演講集 [*The Collected Works of Zhang Taiyan: The Lectures*] (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 2015), 2:1015.

of the Classical Schools of Thought [*Lun zhuzi xue* 論諸子學],” published in 1906, he addressed this issue directly:

Before the Spring and Autumn period, multiple schools of thought had yet to flourish. And after the reign of the Han Emperor Wu 漢武帝, only Confucius was to be revered. While there was no shortage of new schools that moralized eloquently, they had to do so by adhering to Confucian principles and not contradicting them. There were strained interpretations of quotations, their careless spread, increasing concessions to all kinds of doctrines, and even more deviations from the texts’ original and true meanings and connotations. The more strained the interpretations, the more they went against the principles they meant to explain.⁹

When Zhang Taiyan published these words, he felt a strong admiration for the climate of the Spring and Autumn period [770–476 BCE], when various schools of thinkers lived among the people, regarded them as their equals, and freely debated their ideas. Zhang had little regard, however, for the intellectual conditions brought about by the Han dynasty [206 BCE–220] and the unification of the country under Confucianism. As he yearned for the possibility that all schools of thought would be considered equally, he was bound to oppose Mencius’s view of Mohism. Yet, after *Words of Urgency* was retitled *Revised Views*, not only did he change the title of the piece he had originally called “Confucianism and Mohism” to “The Origins of Mohism,” but he also believed, as previously quoted, that impartial love “[was] not a duty upon which common scholars and people [were] meant to conduct their actions.” He thereafter appeared skeptical of the Mohist project’s scope of application. In his later years, Zhang went even so far as to express deep remorse over his early criticism of Confucianism, dismissing it as “insincere and presumptuous comments made more than a decade ago.”¹⁰ His stance had changed completely, and he now considered himself part of the Confucianist guard.

By contrast, Christian theologians, such as Wu Leichuan (who also went by the name Wu Zhenchun 吳震春) and Wang Zhixin were steadfast in their defense of the Mohist doctrine of impartial love. Wu thought that Mencius denounced Mohism’s disregard for filial piety merely to protect Confucian orthodoxy.

9 Zhang Taiyan, *Zhang Taiyan quanji: Yanjiang ji*, 1:48.

10 Zhang Taiyan, “Zhi Liu Yimou shu 致柳翼謀書 [A Letter to Liu Yimou],” in *Zhang Taiyan zhenglun xuanji* 章太炎政論選集 [*Selected Political Writings of Zhang Taiyan*], ed. Tang Zhijun 湯志鈞 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1977), 2:763.

Wu also discredited Mencius's claims: "Such denigrating comments not only defy logic but are also poorly supported. This is not how scholars should acquit themselves." He also pointed out that, even though Mencius's view was purely subjective, it still had an extremely significant and lasting influence on subsequent generations of intellectuals. As a result, Mohism remained commonly censured for its perceived heterodoxy, whereas "The doctrine of impartial love did not go at all against the Confucian doctrines." Wu cites Mozi as emphasizing "the hierarchical order that must define relations between the ruler and the subject, between the superior and the subordinate and between the elder and the younger"¹¹ to show that "there is absolutely no Mohist precept that advocates the eradication of the ancient hierarchical order."¹² However, regarding the concept of "love," the views of Confucianism and Mohism differed in both scope and degree; Wu considered Mohism's "impartial love" closer in meaning to the Christian notion of "universal love." What Confucianism and Mohism had in common was beyond Wu's interest in the matter; after all, in his investigation of Mohism, his original intention had always been to connect Mohism and Christianity and to spread the Christian notion of love.

Wang Zhixin considered that Mencius's passionate attacks against Mohism's impartial love merely had to do with "a narrow-minded attempt at establishing his own school of thought." Based on the Mozi's section on impartial love, Wang Zhixin sought to demonstrate that notions of "filial duty" were indeed part of the Mohist project and that the main difference between Confucianism and Mohism was not in their discussions on filial piety but in the way in which they addressed performing filial duty. Both schools identified filial piety as the heart of ethics in the clan system. Hence, Mencius had no reason to declare that impartial love was bound to imperil filial piety. Wang Zhixin wondered: "Confucians thought that to perform filial piety was to act this way, Mohists thought it was to act that way. They defended different ways of being filial, but what was the point in claiming that Mozi was acting as if he had no father?" Even though Wang did not give any specific examples to support this supposed distinction between the schools' definitions of filial piety, it is possible to deduce what he meant by comparing the *Analects* and the *Mozi* 墨子. For Confucians, filial piety had to do with following every rule and performing every rite related to the life, death, and burial of one's parents or to the offering of sacrifices to

11 Here, Wu Leichuan is referring to the first passage in the second part of the "Shang Tong 尚同 [Upward Conformity]" chapter of the *Mozi*. – Trans.

12 Wu Leichuan 吳雷川, "Mo Di yu Yesu 墨翟與耶穌 [Mo Di and Jesus]," in *Mozi daquan*, 50: 177, 234, 250.

one's ancestors. In the "To Govern [*Wei zheng* 為政]" chapter of the *Analects*, Confucius is recorded as saying: "When parents are still living, they should be cared for and assisted according to the rules of propriety. After they have died, rules of propriety should again to be observed in carrying out the proper rites of burial and offering of sacrifice." Whereas parents were to be supported materially, Confucianism also emphasized the importance of respecting one's parents when caring for them. In the same chapter of the *Analects*, Confucius made the following remark: "Nowadays, people understand filial piety simply as being able to provide for one's parents' subsistence. Yet, this is something even dogs and horses can achieve. If one cannot show deference to one's parents, what is there to differentiate them from dogs and horses?" For Mohists, filial piety consisted of benefitting one's parents. In the first part of the section of the *Mozi* called "Canon [*Jing* 經]," it is defined as such: "Filial piety is to benefit one's parents." In comparison, Confucianism and Mohism clearly differed on this topic. Wang Zhixin's reasoning did not stop there. He added: "We can conclude that the general idea of the impartial love described by Mozi is similar to Christian love."¹³ When studying and interpreting the Mohist doctrine of impartial love, Wang's first objective had always been to connect the Mohist and Christian concepts of love, so as to identify the moment in Chinese history that could serve as an entry point for promoting Christianity. In sum, Wu and Wang's defense of impartial love was based on the exact same line of reasoning and shared the same objective, that is, to promote Christianity.

Another intellectual who defended Mohism and offered an analysis of impartial love was Wu Feibai 伍非百 [1890–1965]. In his view, Mohist impartial love emerged from the dynamic relationship between love [*ai* 愛] and benefit [*li* 利]. He wrote about them: "Love is bound to embrace all of its object, but benefit does not have to. Therefore, love does not discriminate, while benefit does it to a great extent." Benefit was one of the main aspects of impartial love, yet it discriminated heavily. Therefore, it was impossible to equate impartial love with the kind of love that did not discriminate. That is why, in the end, Wu found Mencius's criticism to be unfounded: "Mencius failed to properly understand Mozi's original meaning. He grasped the mention of 'impartial,' but left out how it related to other precepts. He focused on the mention of 'love,' but he was unable to address the issue of benefit in a dialectical manner." Wu further defended Mohism's impartial love by differentiating between humans and animals. According to him, the fundamental difference between humans and animals was not found in how impartial their love was but,

13 Wang Zhixin 王治心, "Mozi zhexue 墨子哲學 [The Philosophy of Mozi]," in *Mozi daquan*, 33: 393, 410.

rather, in their capacity to love. He declared: "Humans not only can show love for their own fathers, but also can love other people's fathers. This is what impartial love is. Beasts not only have no love for other people's fathers, but they also have no love for their own. Impartially, they do not love. Loving someone is something that humans are capable of. Loving nothing is what beasts do." Mencius could not see this. For this reason, Wu considered his attack on Mozi "the kind of fallacy where one pays too much attention to categories and fails to look with accuracy at what lies behind them."¹⁴ Wu set out to analyze the implied meaning of "impartial love." He arrived at the conclusion that impartial love had nothing to do with disregarding one's father, or to put it differently, that universal love did not oppose filial piety. He managed to debunk Mencius's criticism.

Chen Guyuan and Lang Qingxiao provide us with the last two analyses of Mohism's impartial love to be discussed in this section. Chen considered the doctrine of impartial love to be at the heart of Mozi's political thought. For Chen, the accurate implication of the doctrine involved both "a mutual and universal kind of love" and a "mutual interest in benefitting each other." Love meant to care for everybody; benefit meant to work for the greater good. Chen first drew a comparison with the Confucian ideal of *datong* 大同, or the Great Harmony, and then emphasized the importance and significance of Mohism's impartial love. He wrote: "Mozi may not have used the two characters of *datong*, but the real meaning of what has been recorded¹⁵ points to the ideal of Confucius's *datong*. Mozi uses the character *jian* 兼 for 'impartial,' which is actually far more realist than Confucius."¹⁶ This reasoning led Chen to reject the following remark by Shi Jiao 尸佼 [390–330 BCE]: "Confucius advocated for fairness and Mozi for impartiality, there is no difference between them."¹⁷ For Chen, "fairness" [*gong* 公] remained an empty

14 Wu Feibai 伍非百, "Mozi dayi shu 墨子大義述 [A Commentary on Mozi's Main Tenets]," in *Mozi daquan*, 27: 378–79.

15 Chen Guyuan seemed to refer to the following excerpt from the third part of *Mozi's* section on impartial love: "Today, I am adopting this principle to help the land under Heaven to rise and benefit from taking impartial love as a standard to govern. Then, with attentive ears and keen eyes, the people will assist each other in listening and seeing, they will assist each other with strengthened limbs and they will instruct each other diligently and in a good way. Thus the old and those with neither wife nor children will be looked after as long as they live, and the young, the weak and the orphaned will be cared for and be able to grow. These will be the benefits of governing according to impartial love." See Sun Yirang, *Mozi jiangou*, 116.

16 Chen Guyuan, "Mozi zhengzhi zhaxue," 440.

17 Chen Guyuan's reference to the *Shizi* 尸子 [390–330 BCE] is inaccurate. The "Guang Ze 廣澤" chapter of the *Shizi* says: "Mozi revered impartiality and Confucius fairness, the

slogan, while “impartiality” meant acting concretely. As an intellectual, Chen was, after all, a socialist, and he sought to connect the doctrine of impartial love to the doctrines of socialism. He wrote: “Mozi’s doctrine of impartial love was already of great value for society back in his days. And even the last stages of socialism would not eclipse the importance and scope of impartial love.”¹⁸ Lang Qingxiao was convinced that Mohism’s impartial love could help end contemporary warfare. He argued: “Today’s world has turned into a battlefield. If the nations that engage in warfare had the chance to hear of the doctrine of impartial love, they might cease their offensives and abandon their aggressive ambitions. So then, when the world would be full of compassion, the battlefield would turn into peace.”¹⁹ Both Chen Guyuan and Lang Qingxiao opposed Mencius’s remarks on Mozi. They shared the opinion that Mohism never attempted to challenge the moral principles governing families, may it be the filial piety or even the notion of benevolence [*ci* 慈]. However, their interpretations on the implications of disregarding filial piety differed. On the one hand, Chen Guyuan was convinced that impartial love did not amount to failing one’s father. On the other hand, he described this lack of regard for one’s father as an ideal so high that even Mohism could hardly claim to be able to attain it. He thus declared: “For Mencius to be cursing Mozi like this, saying that he is disregarding both his father and his ruler, today, that would simply be considered flattery!”²⁰ In Chen’s view, impartial love ought to achieve the

emperor reveres rectitude, Tianzi revered uniformity and Liezi humility, and the talented, they revere non being separated from others. For centuries, they have used their own doctrine to contradict each other, because in the end, they are all obsessed with their own ego and their prejudices and they cannot see clearly anymore.... If it were to be found that in essence, impartiality, fairness, humility, uniformity, rectitude, amiability, and the coexistence among all people, that all of these refer to the same idea, then there would be no case for mutual censure.” See Li Shoukui 李守奎 and Li Yi 李軼, *Shizi yizhu* 尸子譯注 [*Translation and Annotation of the Shizi*] (Harbin: Heilongjiang renmin chubanshe, 2003), 42.

- 18 Chen Guyuan, “Mozi zhengzhi zhaxue,” 519. Chen is not the only one to have brought up Mohism and socialism together during the period of the Republic of China. Liang Qichao, for instance, also wrote: “The art of governing according to Mozi has nothing to do with nationalism. It rather compares to cosmopolitan socialism.” See Liang Qichao, “Zi Mozi xueshuo 子墨子學說 [The Teachings of Mozi],” in *Yinbing shi heji: Zhuanji*, 37:41. Zhi Weicheng 支偉成 [1899–1929] wrote: “Let us look at the socialist government of the working and peasant forces in today’s Russia: it will prove that Mozi’s doctrine was not simply a dream after all.” See Zhi Weicheng 支偉成, *Mozi zongshi* 墨子綜釋 [*Explanations of the Mozi*] (Shanghai: Taidong tushu ju, 1925), 17. And in Yang Kuan’s words: “In principle, Mohism is no different than today’s socialism.” See Yang Kuan, “Moxue fenqi yanjiu,” 32.
- 19 Lang Qingxiao 郎擎霄, “Mozi zhaxue 墨子哲學 [The Philosophy of Mozi],” in *Mozi daquan*, 32:551.
- 20 Chen Guyuan, “Mozi zhengzhi zhaxue,” 519.

happiness of all members of society, and because it did not acknowledge partial love for one's parents, it ended up being described as failing one's father. This refusal to first pay respect to one's father was a socialist ideal that Chen particularly cherished, and because Mohists had not managed to achieve this ideal, he considered Mencius to have actually overestimated them. Liang Qingxiao thought that Mozi did not deserve the label that Mencius gave him: "Mencius defaming Mozi by saying he did not recognize his own father, [and] by accusing him of acting like a beast, that attitude was truly inappropriate."²¹ In sum, it appears that although they both rejected Mencius's criticism, Chen and Liang had a different understanding of what it meant. Chen's peculiar interpretation of the matter was mainly determined by his adherence to socialism.

2 Two Kinds of Impartial Love: The Different Versions of Mo Di and His Disciples

In contrast to the intellectuals discussed above who expressed outright opposition to Mencius's criticism, some thinkers distinguished between two kinds of impartial love. Although they thought that the kind advocated by Mozi did not in any way challenge the piety owed by children to their parents, they considered that the Mohist disciples who followed Mozi were to blame for their own lack of filial piety. Historically, this point of view was known as far back as Ban Gu 班固 [32–92], who lived during the Eastern Han [25–220]. In "The Bibliographical Treatise on Arts and Literature [*Yiwen zhi* 藝文志]" in the *History of the Former Han Dynasty*, Ban Gu remarked that Mohism cared to "provide for the virtuous and knowledgeable elders of society, and for this reason it promoted impartial love; ... it revered the patriarchal clan system and the rites regarding the offering of sacrifices, as well as the strict observance of the hierarchical relations between fathers and sons, and hence, it believed in the existence of ghosts and spirits; ... it considered filial piety to be the principle by which the land under Heaven ought to be governed and hence, it promoted conformity to one's superiors." In Ban Gu's interpretation, it was evident that the acknowledgment of family and blood ties is at the heart of the Mohist doctrines regarding the respect of ghosts and one's superiors. This seemed to be an aspect shared, to a certain degree, by the Mohist and Confucian ethics. Although Ban Gu made no mention of Mencius's criticism, it is hard to imagine Mencius attacking a Mohist doctrine whose theoretical foundations were similar to the that of Confucians. However, Ban Gu affirmed

²¹ Lang Qingxiao, "Mozi zhexue," 547.

that later disciples of Mohism were the ones to blame for grossly distorting the original meaning of impartial love and for ruining the “harmonious” relationship that had once existed between Mohism and Confucianism: “Those inexperienced disciples purposefully decided to merely see frugality’s positive aspects and so, they opposed traditional propriety and they blindly promoted impartial love’s implicit meaning without aptly discriminating between those who are close to oneself by blood and those who are not.”²²

Because of the Mohists’ overinterpretation, impartial love gradually diverged from the meaning originally attached to it, and it evolved into a doctrine that completely disregarded traditional propriety and family relationships. Han Yu inherited Ban Gu’s views on the matter and wrote: “The debate actually arose from the later generations of Confucians and Mohists who competed to sell the teachings of their own masters and who failed to realize that the doctrines they promoted were already a far cry from the original meaning taught by Confucius and Mozi.”²³

Scholars such as Xie Wuliang 謝無量 [1884–1964] were impressed by Ban Gu and Han Yu’s remarks and commended the original meaning of impartial love while drawing a distinction between Mozi and his successors. Xie Wuliang first pointed out that the love advocated by Mozi was different from the love of the Confucians: the former “was the kind of love that did not differentiate between close kin and distant relations, did not reaffirm the importance of hierarchical relations, and was given to all equally”; the latter “was a love offered according to how close or distant one’s kin and relations were and where they stood in the hierarchy of relations.” Based on their inner meaning and the forms they took, a close comparison could be made between impartial love and the Christ’s universal love: after all, society’s “greater good” was what they both sought to achieve. Following Ban Gu, Xie insisted that Mencius’s accusations were “in fact, directed at the corrupt opinions of the later Mohists.” In his opinion, a lot of passages in the *Mozi* stressed the importance of filial piety and highlighted love’s key role in eradicating social conflict. Yet these passages could only be attributed to Mozi and what he first meant by “impartial love.” The Mohists who came afterward completely cast aside impartial love’s original meaning. It resulted in an altered doctrine that ignored the due respect one owes to one’s parents. As a defender of Confucian orthodoxy, Mencius had absolutely no tolerance for schools of thought that tended to go in this way. This is why,

22 Ban Gu, *Han shu*, 1738.

23 Han Yu, “Du Mozi,” 129.

according to Xie, he "took the Mohists' corrupt interpretations to an extreme and severely criticized them,"²⁴ initiating a cycle of violent attacks against the Mohists.

Sun Deqian 孫德謙 [1869–1935] and Chen Zhu 陳柱 [1890–1944] had a similar vision of the distinction between Mozi and the later Mohist disciples, but their reasoning was slightly different. Sun Deqian wondered: "Based on impartial love's original meaning, Mozi was instructing people to show filial piety to their fathers. To instruct them to be filial, is that not the complete opposite of Mencius's accusing him to 'act as if he was fatherless'?" In responding to this question, Sun first turned his attention to the word "master" (i.e., to the character *zi* 子) as a way to refer to someone. According to Sun, Mencius's use of this term to refer to Mo Di 墨翟 revealed the respect that Mencius had for the philosopher, showing that Mencius never meant to deny Mo Di's authority. Sun goes further by highlighting the use of the character *shi* 氏 in the *Mencius*. The concept of impartial love is mentioned twice in the *Mencius*, but it is described slightly differently in both passages: the first points out the "impartial love of Mozi" [*Mozi jian'ai* 墨子兼愛] (in the first part of the "Jin Xin 盡心" chapter), the second discusses it as the "impartial love of the School of Mozi [*Mo shi jian'ai* 墨氏兼愛]" (in the last part of the "Teng Wen Gong 滕文公" chapter).

Sun interpreted the first passage as Mencius praising the spirit of Mozi's impartial love for everything under Heaven and he understood the second passage as a criticism of the Mohist disciples' unfilial behavior. In both, Mencius appeared to refer to the same "impartial love"; however, Mencius addressed the question differently, perhaps because of the distortion of the doctrine's original meaning by the Mohists. Regarding this, Sun added: "Not understanding that Mencius's criticism was aimed at the Mohists' disciples led to centuries of Mozi being unjustly interpreted."²⁵ Sun's explanation seemed both to defend Mohism's impartial love and to protect Mencius's image as an enlightened figure of Confucianism. Nevertheless, the theoretical foundations on which it rested remain shaky at best, and therefore Sun's conclusion seems to be merely the result of personal opinion.²⁶

24 Xie Wuliang 謝無量, *Zhongguo zhexue shi* 中國哲學史 [*History of Chinese Philosophy*] (Shanghai: Zhonghua shuju, 1926), 49–50.

25 Sun Deqian 孫德謙, "Shi Mo jingshuo bian yi 釋墨經說辯義 [An Analysis on the Different Commentaries of the Mohist Canon]," *Xue heng* 學衡 25 (1924): 6.

26 Zheng Shiqu 鄭師渠 wrote: "Based on this new analysis, Mozi certainly can be cleared of the charges brought against him and the prestige of the Second Sage Mencius also manages to remain unblemished. Is that not getting the best of both worlds? It can be said of Sun Deqian that he really gave a lot of thought to the matter, but is this sort of pacifying

Chen Zhu used the term *shi* 勢, which can mean a “force,” a “power,” or an “influence,” to describe how the doctrine of impartial love evolved over the years after Mozi. *Shi* usually refers to a certain tendency in the development or transformation of something. Chen used this term to describe how the meaning of impartial love changed according to the different interpretations offered by Mohist disciples. Chen found a tendency in these thinkers’ discourses, which he found dangerous in the way they portrayed “impartial love” for instance, to be “giving up on one’s kin and not caring for them,” “making the search for benefits the fundamental mission of life,” or “loving only oneself.” For Chen, this sort of thinking could bring chaos on earth. He thought that Mencius’s analysis of these misinterpretations of Mozi’s original doctrine was very perceptive: “Because he was afraid of the Mohists’ corruption of Mozi’s teachings and of the ways in which it could be disastrous for humanity, he felt he had to prove they were wrong.”²⁷ In reflecting on this topic, Sun Deqian and Chen Zhu brought up two very different concepts, but they held the same position regarding the distortion of impartial love by the Mohists. In addition to narrowing the object of Mencius’s criticism, Chen concisely summarized the fundamental reasons for the divergence between Confucian and Mohist views: “The difference between Confucius and Mozi is that Mozi bases his doctrine on Heaven and Confucius on parents.”²⁸ More precisely, Confucianism considered filial piety the principle that governed the land under Heaven, and therefore it was more concerned with people’s emotions than with reaping material benefits. The theories of Mohism, however, were founded on an emotionless Heaven, and this resulted in excessive emphasis on material gain and disregard for ordinary human feelings. This allowed Mohism to change its stance on certain issues easily, whereas Confucianism maintained the same principles over a long period. In the conflict between Heaven and one’s parents, Chen saw the source of inspiration for both schools of thought, and he believed that this explained, above all, their different attitudes about human feelings and concrete benefits. It is quite obvious that, between these two schools, Chen Zhu was more inclined to endorse the Confucian perspective.

comment convincing at all?” See Zheng Shiqu 鄭師渠, “Xue Heng pai lun zhuzi xue 學衡派論諸子學 [The Xue Heng Faction’s Discourse on the Study of Classical Thought],” *Zhongzhou xue kan* 中州學刊, no. 1 (2001).

27 Chen Zhu 陳柱, “Dingben Mozi jiang buzheng zixu 定本墨子閒詁補正自敘 [A Preface to the Definitive Emended and Annotated *Mozi*],” *Xue heng* 學衡 56 (1926): 2.

28 Chen Zhu 陳柱, “Moxue shi lun 墨學十論 [The Ten Credos of Mohist Philosophy],” in *Mozi daquan*, 37:151.

3 The Significance of Impartial Love for the New Culture Movement

In the face of cultural invasion from the West and the obvious corruption of the Confucian tradition, some factions of the New Culture movement attempted to find similarities between Mohism and Western civilization in order to foster a favorable environment for the spread of Western ideas in China. Others conjured up the doctrines and spirit of Mohism so as to attack the Confucian autocracy and to arouse the patriotic passion of their contemporaries in saving the country from imminent downfall. The concept of impartial love played a fundamental role in the New Culture movement's ideology, whether it was used to infuse a spirit of sacrifice in the people for the sake of others or to promote a doctrine that sought, essentially, to defend equality for all.

Yi Baisha 易白沙 [1886–1921] is representative of this movement to use Mohist teaching to save the country. Many references to Mohist doctrines as being able to “benefit one’s compatriots” or to “rescue the nation” can be found in his writings. Yi endeavored to demonstrate how Mohist philosophy could have a positive influence on his contemporaries. He believed that the doctrines of “opposing aggression” [*fei gong* 非攻], “moderating expenditure” [*jie yong* 節用], and “impartial love,” which are part of the *Mozi*’s “ten credos” [*shi lun* 十論], could play a crucial role in rejuvenating the Chinese nation and that even some of the other credos, such as “the will of Heaven” [*tian zhi* 天志] and “clarifying ghosts” [*ming gui* 明鬼], could benefit the common people. The modern scholar Ye Zongbao 葉宗寶 confirmed: “Without a doubt, what motivated Yi Baisha, when he set out to champion the Mohist philosophy, was his quest for a spirit that would help save the nation from its imminent downfall.”²⁹ For Yi Baisha, China was in a state where “people were hardly able to show love for one another” and this would certainly lead to “general confusion, confrontations, pillages and the predatory invasion and occupation of China,” chaotic circumstances that were rather similar to those depicted in the first part of the *Mozi*’s section on impartial love. Yi insisted with a sense of urgency: “Impartial love cannot be delayed.”³⁰ After all, he hoped that impartial love would end the conflicts and chaos afflicting his country.

29 Ye Zongbao 葉宗寶, “Lun Wu Si shiqi zun Mo yi Ru ji qi yuanyin 論五四時期尊墨抑儒及其原因 [The Reasons of a Pro-Mozi Movement to Restrain Confucianism during the May Fourth Period],” *Huanghe shuili zhiye jishu xueyuan xuebao* 黃河水利職業技術學院學報, no. 3 (2004).

30 Yi Baisha 易白沙, “Shu Mo 述墨 [On Mozi],” in *Yi Baisha ji* 易白沙集 [An Anthology of Yi Baisha], ed. Chen Xianchu 陳先初 (Changsha: Hunan renmin chubanshe, 2008), 55.

In addition to regarding impartial love as a tool to help save the country, intellectuals in the New Culture movement also saw it as a powerful weapon against autocracy. Three lines of reasoning are found in their attempts to demonstrate the power of impartial love to dismantle the autocracy: first, they drew a clear distinction between Confucianism's hierarchical love and Mohism's impartial love so as to highlight the opposition between autocracy and equality; second, while offering a criticism of Mencius, they identified the differences in the basic principles between the Confucian and Mohist systems of thought; and, third, they underscored the compatibility of impartial love and bourgeois democratic ethics.

First, intellectuals in the New Culture movement saw a sharp difference between the filial love of the Confucians and the Mohists' type of love. Chen Duxiu 陳獨秀 [1879–1942] pointed out that “filial piety, as advocated by the Confucians, is different from the Mohists' type of love because it values the relative closeness or distance of one's kin, and respects hierarchy, and this is the chasm that separates Confucians and Mohists and that explains Mencius accusing Mozi of not caring for his father.”³¹ Hu Shi 胡適 [1891–1962] held a similar opinion: “This doctrine of altruism contradicted Confucius's teaching that one ought to treat one's kin with kindness and generosity and not care so much for people who were not closely related to oneself.”³² Hu also wrote: “Mohism's impartial love was rooted in the doctrine affirming the will of Heaven above all else. Originally, it meant that one must fully love and help others. It thus differs from the Confucians' superficial support of elders.”³³ Chen and Hu differentiated between the Confucian and Mohist definitions of love, and both of them came to the conclusion that Mencius seized this difference as a pretext for attacking Mohism. Even though Hu never specifically addressed the merits and weaknesses of both schools of thought, his mention of Confucianism's “superficiality” suffices to reveal how unsatisfied he was with the hierarchical love of the Confucians.

31 Chen Duxiu 陳獨秀, “Xianfa yu Kong jiao 憲法與孔教 [The Constitution and Confucianism],” in *Chen Duxiu zhuzuo xuanbian* 陳獨秀著作選編 [Selected Works of Chen Duxiu], ed. Ren Jianshu 任建樹 and Li Yinde 李銀德 (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 2014), 1:250.

32 Hu Shi 胡適, “Xian Qin mingxue shi 先秦名學史 [The Pre-Qin History of Logic],” in *Hu Shi wenji* 胡適文集 [The Collected Works of Hu Shi], ed. Ouyang Zhesheng 歐陽哲生 (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2013), 6:49.

33 Hu Shi, “Zhuzi bu chuyu wangguan lun 諸子不出於王官論 [On the Wise Thinkers of the Classical Schools Not Being Officials],” in *Hu Shi wenji*, 2:167.

Second, intellectuals in the New Culture movement attempted to refute Mencius's arguments against Mohism's impartial love. Qian Xuantong 錢玄同 [1887–1939] wrote:

I believe that if we do not break away from the family as an institution, we are bound to fail at achieving happiness for all humanity. It is a completely absurd view that after we have broken away from our families, our parents and siblings will become like strangers to us. The issue of impartial love hints precisely at the need to let go of the family and the clan. Impartial love's objective is to teach people not to provide merely for one's parents and not to save their affection only for their children. How possibly can we consider this theory to be absurd?³⁴

Qian clarified his argument by offering two more propositions. First, he considered the clan system of Confucianism detrimental to the development of individuals and society as a whole. Second, he thought that the Mohist doctrine of impartial love could play a fundamental role in freeing people from the shackles of the family and clan system. It was difficult to support the ancient system at that point, and "impartial love" was seen as a solution. Naturally, Qian remained unpersuaded by Mencius's vilifying remarks on impartial love. Yet, among the intellectuals in the New Culture movement, Wu Yu 吳虞 [1872–1949] clearly stood out as opposing Mencius's discourse on Mozi the most vehemently. Wu even devoted an essay to the topic, "Finding Fault with Mencius's Refutation of Yang Zhu and Mo Di [*Bian Mengzi pi Yang Mo zhi fei* 辨孟子辟楊墨之非]," in which he counterattacked Mencius's lambasting of the two other philosophers. To add weight to his argument that "impartial love" had absolutely nothing to do with a lack of filial piety, Wu quoted a passage from the third part of the *Mozi's* section on impartial love: "It is certain that if I first set out to love other people's close relatives and to care for their benefit, then they might reciprocate by loving my family and by caring for them." Wu commented: "The purpose of Mozi's impartial love is not merely to wish for other people to love our close relatives and care for their interests, it is about loving others' relatives and caring about their interests first. Only then may people care for ours in return. From this passage alone, it is already perfectly clear that impartial love can in no way be denounced as a lack of concern for one's parents." Wu based his analysis on his study of the *Mozi*, in which he found evidence that Mozi did not at all neglect the love one owes to one's own

34 Yang Tianshi 楊天石, ed., *Qian Xuantong riji: Zhengli ben* 錢玄同日記(整理本) [*The Collated Diaries of Qian Xuantong*] (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2014), 293.

kin. Wu was adamant in his refutation of Mencius's criticism that followed his interpretation of the *Mozi*. Yet Wu also turned his attention to how impartial love was linked to some of the arguments found in Confucianism. He wrote:

In the *Classic of Filial Piety* [*Xiao jing* 孝經], Confucius is recorded as saying, "Respect shown to one's father makes all sons happy, respect shown to one's elder brother makes all younger brothers happy, respect shown to the ruler makes all subjects happy." The purpose here is the same as that of Mozi's impartial love. Mencius saying that "when one kills another person's father, this person may come and kill one's father and when one kills another person's brother, this person may come and kill one's brother"³⁵ is also no different from Mozi's principle of impartial love. Does this mean that Confucius, too, should be criticized for disregarding his father, and that Mencius was actually posing as a "man without a father"? Mencius's criticizing of Mozi for the latter's supposed lack of filial piety fails to be supported by evidence, regardless of how hard Mencius attempted to justify it.³⁶

Earlier, Wu demonstrated that, in Mohism, impartial love and lack of filial piety are completely unrelated. This could be described as a defensive tactic for countering Mencius's attack. This time, Wu penetrated deep into the territory of Confucian dogma and selectively picked out statements that agreed with the doctrine of impartial love so as to prove that Mencius's criticism of Mozi was an example of the Chinese saying that warns against crushing one's foot while trying to throw a rock at somebody else. Wu's tactic here should be seen as a direct offensive. Nevertheless, it must not be forgotten that bringing up the *Classic of Filial Piety* and excerpts from the *Mencius* might have been a convenient strategy for refuting Mencius's arguments, but it does not mean that Confucianism and Mohism are entirely equivalent. Like Chen, Hu, and Qian, Wu Yu believed that an unbridgeable gulf existed between the Confucian and Mohist schools of thought: "At the most fundamental level, Mohist ideology absolutely cannot tolerate Confucianism. As for Mencius, his offensive against Mozi's impartial love and his accusations regarding filial piety are not

35 Here, Wu Yu is referring to a passage in the second part of the "Jin Xin 盡心" chapter of the *Mencius*. – Trans.

36 Wu Yu 吳虞, *Wu Yu ji* 吳虞集 [*An Anthology of Wu Yu*], ed. Tian Miaomiao 田苗苗 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2013), 359.

only in complete contradiction with Mozi's doctrine, but they also do not even slightly conform with logic."³⁷

Finally, intellectuals in the New Culture movement were attracted by the notion of "impartial love" because of its practical significance. For this faction, the meaningful implications of impartial love transcended theory. Their interest in refuting Mencius's criticism had more to do with how impartial love seemed to agree with modern democracy and modern ethical ideals. In opposing Mencius, Wu also posed the following questions:

How could being "self-serving" [*wei wo* 為我] lead to a society without a sovereign? How could "impartial love" lead to a society that would not acknowledge fathers? That sort of illogical remark has long been ridiculed by scholars. And as for today's democratic nations, which, generally, do not have monarchs to speak of, can we really consider their citizens to be like the beasts cited by Meng Ke [Mencius] in his attempt to defame Mozi?³⁸

In this specific passage, Wu seemed determined to undermine Mencius, but, in fact, he sought mainly to emphasize the fact that, whereas Confucianism could not possibly coexist with bourgeois democracy and republicanism, the doctrines of Yang Zhu 楊朱 [395–335 BCE] and Mo Di were perfectly compatible with contemporary democracy. In comparison with Wu, Qian Xuantong's way of addressing this issue was far more direct: "The ethics of imperialism are based on 'the fathers' affection, the sons' filial duty, the elder brothers' kindness, the younger brothers' deference, the husbands' righteousness, the wives' obedience, the elders' benevolence, the youths' compliance, the sovereigns' human-heartedness [*ren* 仁], and the subjects' loyalty."³⁹ The ethics of the Republic should be based only on 'impartial love.'⁴⁰ The dichotomy between "imperialist ethics" and "republican ethics" demonstrated clearly the conflict that existed between Confucianism's autocratic nature

37 Wu Yu, "Mozi de laonong zhuyi 墨子的勞農主義 [Mozi's Doctrine in Favor of the Working Class and the Peasantry]," in *Wu Yu ji*, 82–83.

38 Wu Yu, "Jiazu zhidu wei zhuanzhi zhuyi zhi genju lun 家族制度為專制主義之根據論 [The Patriarchal Clan System as a Foundation for Autocracy]," in *Wu Yu ji*, 11.

39 Here, Wu Yu is referring to a passage in the "Li Yun 禮運" chapter of the *Liji* 禮記 [*Book of Rites*]. – Trans.

40 Qian Xuantong 錢玄同, "Fude Guoqing 賦得國慶 [Verses for National Day]," in *Qian Xuantong wenji* 錢玄同文集 [*The Collected Works of Qian Xuantong*] (Beijing: Zhonghua renmin daxue chubanshe, 1999), 2:210.

and Mohism's egalitarian qualities. Chen Duxiu's perspective on the matter is again more detailed and precise:

If we are dissatisfied with the ethics of ancient times, it is because filial and fraternal piety are too narrow in scope. The Confucians uttered statements such as "love must be given according to status and hierarchy" or "love must be performed first toward one's own parents." That is too unreliable and hypocritical. In this ideal society of theirs, where "everyone would show filial obedience to their elder relatives and revere their elder brothers," strife would be far fiercer and fear far more widespread. Therefore, the modern ethical ideals serve to widen in scope the piety due to family and to exchange it for a universal and friendly affection for all members of society.⁴¹

It is quite obvious that the object of Chen's criticism was in fact the doctrine of filial and fraternal piety and its emphasis on status and hierarchy. Chen not only drew attention to the narrowness of this type of piety as well as to the excessively hypocritical love obliged by its hierarchy but also imputed the social conflicts looming on the horizon to the corrupt practices enabled by this set of beliefs. In his view, the solution was "to widen in scope the piety due to family and to exchange it for a universal and friendly affection for all members of society." Even though Chen did not provide a clear definition of what he meant by a "friendly affection for all members of society," it is easy to infer that he was referring to the Mohist philosophy of impartial love.⁴²

When they set out to interpret the Mohist concept of impartial love, what the intellectuals in the New Culture movement first aimed to do was quite explicit: they wished to stress the autocratic flavor of Confucian hierarchical love and to use Mohist impartial love as a weapon to attack autocratic thinking. It might be inferred from this that there was no room for compromise between the Confucian and Mohist schools, yet, as was advocated, this perspective also

41 Chen Duxiu, "Xin wenhua yundong shi shenme? 新文化運動是什麼? [What Is the New Culture Movement?]," in *Chen Duxiu zhuzuo xuanbian*, 2:219.

42 Although Chen Duxiu highly regarded impartial love, he did not advise relying heavily on it. He demonstrated, in fact, a clear and perspicacious understanding of the issues raised by impartial love. Hence, he remarked: "If I devote myself to sacrificing myself and to benefitting other people, this would mean that I would be living for other people and not for myself. By no means is that the fundamental reason of living as an individual. Even Mozi's thinking cannot help but being too partial in the end." See Chen Duxiu, "Ren sheng zhen yi 人生真義 [The Real Meaning of Human Existence]," in *Chen Duxiu zhuzuo xuanbian*, 1:386.

managed to conceal the relationship between the two systems of thought. Moreover, although these factions used impartial love to serve the patriotic objectives of a movement well anchored in reality and to connect it to the ethics of modern democracy, to a certain degree they also overlooked how their epoch differed from Mozi's.

4 The Fierce Critics of Mohism's "Impartial Love"

The "Geng Zhu 耕柱" chapter of the *Mozi* records a conversation between Wu Mazi 巫馬子⁴³ and Mozi. Wu Mazi believed it was impossible for him to love impartially. He explained: "I love the Zou people more than I love the Yue people, I love the Lu people more than I love the Zou, I love my fellow villagers more than I love the Lu people, I love my clan more than I love my villagers, I love my kin more than I love my clan, and I love myself more than I love my kin, because in the end, it is my own self who is the closest to me."⁴⁴ Reflecting upon the relative intimacy and distance between people, Wu was convinced that the easiest love is the love that one has for oneself, because, after all, this is how most people are bound to feel. Under the Republic of China, intellectuals who opposed the concept of impartial love also centered their attention on its improbability. However, they based their arguments on slightly different grounds than Wu did. Three different types of arguments were made, each of which is covered briefly below.

Liang Qichao was one of the first to criticize Mohism's impartial love on the grounds that it was impossible to live up to. Still, Liang's study of Mohism should be divided into two distinct periods.⁴⁵ Liang believed that impartial love was absolute and nonhierarchical. On this particular point, his position never changed. However, he once declared: "I would not hesitate to challenge

43 It is still hard to determine whether Wu Mazi should be considered Confucian. For the time being, we consider him simply an opponent of Mozi. On this topic, see Chris Fraser, "The Ethics of the Mohist Dialogues," in *The Mozi as an Evolving Text: Different Voices in Early Chinese Thought*, ed. Carine Defoort and Nicolas Standaert (Boston: Brill, 2013).

44 Sun Yirang, *Mozi jiangou*, 435.

45 The first period corresponds to Liang Qichao's production of *Xinmin congbao* 新民叢報 [*New Citizen Journal*], and representative essays of this period in regard to our topic were published in 1904: "Zi Mozi xueshuo," "Mozi zhi lunli xue 墨子之論理學 [A Neo-Confucian Approach to Mozi's Logic]." The second period corresponds to the 1920s and to works such as *Mo jing jiaoshi* 墨經校釋 [*A Collection of Annotated Passages from the Mohist Canons*], *Mozi xue'an* and *Xian Qin zhengzhi sixiang shi* 先秦政治思想史 [*Political Thought of the Pre-Qin Period*].

the opinions I expressed in the past based on the ideas I am defending today.”⁴⁶ Although this remark makes clear his thinking evolved considerably over the years, his understanding of impartial love seemed to have changed the most. In “The Teachings of Mozi [*Zi Mozi xueshuo* 子墨子學說],” Liang not only compared impartial love to the love advocated by Jesus of Nazareth but also considered it diametrically opposed to Confucian hierarchical love. Moreover, he argued that impartial love was “merely a theory of perfection,” that it was “absolutely impossible to achieve in reality” and that “it could not meet ethical standards.” In contrast, he described the Confucian love as “the most effective way to maintain social order.”⁴⁷ For Liang, it was obvious that, in terms of how achievable it was, Mohist impartial love did not compare to Confucian hierarchical love. More than a decade later, in *The Life and Thought of Mozi* [*Mozi xue'an* 墨子學案], although Liang still adhered to the Confucian definition of love – “the social organization of ancient times naturally did not allow it to be any different” – he also unexpectedly argued in favor of impartial love. Concerning Mencius’s discourse on Mozi, he maintained: “If it did really manage to convey Mozi’s spirit, it was not in manufacturing a bad name for it but, rather, in singing its praises.” Indeed, he thought that Mencius’s argument equating impartial love with failing one’s father and with bestial behavior was entirely unfounded. The sharpest contrast between Liang’s posture during that particular period and the one he had adopted earlier is found in how he newly addressed the topic of impartial love’s practicability. He wrote: “Today’s Russia is governed by the working class and the peasantry. Surely, this can be regarded as the partial realization of Mozi’s ideal, which was for ‘impartiality to take over status.’ Whether or not the motives of the governing people of Russia are ethical, this is something on which I will not opine for the moment. It is already enough to highlight how this stands as a proof of Mozi’s doctrine and how it contradicts the notion that ‘though quite beautiful, impartial love is useless.’”⁴⁸ In the past, it sufficed for Liang to address impartial love’s impracticability in theory only. Later in his life, he witnessed the success of the Russian Revolution and the establishment of its socialist regime, and he seemed to glimpse, amid all these changes, the achievement of impartial love. He hence came to believe that it was an attainable ideal. However, barely a year later, Liang rejected the doctrine outright again. Not only did he believe that Mencius’s criticism was not meant “to be cruel,” but he also declared Mozi’s advocacy of impartial love

46 Liang Qichao, “Qingdai xueshu gailun 清代學術概論 [Introduction to Academia during the Qing Dynasty],” in *Yinbing shi heji: Zhuanji*, 34:63.

47 Liang Qichao, “Zi Mozi xueshuo,” 37:34–35.

48 Liang Qichao, “Mozi xue’an,” 39:10, 70, 11.

"impracticable, even though it remains a very desirable ideal."⁴⁹ By then, Liang had returned to his former position on the topic. That for a short moment he defended the notion of impartial love and that he thought it to be practicable, this particular volte-face can be interpreted as a momentary response to the turbulent period he witnessed (and, more specifically, to the establishment of a communist regime in Russia). If he kept linking Mohism with the many new policies of the Russian socialist regime, it was only in order to identify a theory that would allow him to broach the latter topic. His first objective remained to launch a fierce attack on the revealed abuses of the socialist regime, by using the language of Mohist philosophy to do so.⁵⁰ This explains why, in the brief interval of a year, Liang started to refute the achievability of Mozi's ideal again.

Qian Mu 錢穆 [1895–1990] and Guo Moruo 郭沫若 [1892–1978] also argued against Mohism's impartial love. Their arguments focused on the doctrine's contradictions, on which they wanted to shed some light in an effort to challenge the notion of impartial love all together. Qian regarded "impartial love" and the "exaltation of those with merit" [*shangxian* 尚賢] as the "two pillars" or the "main skeleton" in Mozi's teachings. He thought that, in advocating these two key principles, Mozi aimed fundamentally to spark "opposition to the nobility." Rebellious against the aristocratic class was a common concern in both Mohism and Confucianism; yet the two schools of thought differed in their understanding of rites and music. Through rites and music, Confucianism aspired to the restoration of the patriarchal clan system as it existed in the idealized period of the Xia [ca. 2070–1600 BCE], the Shang [1600–1046 BCE], and the Zhou [1046–256 BCE] dynasties, and it challenged members of the nobility who frequently overstepped their authority. Mohism wished to overthrow the

49 Liang Qichao, "Xian Qin zhengzhi sixiang shi 先秦政治思想史 [Political Thought in the Pre-Qin Period]," in *Yinbing shi heji: Zhuanji*, 50:117.

50 In his later years, Liang Qichao rejected all of Mohism's notions of impartial love, material benefit, and social organization. He wrote: "Mozi wanted to break away from any kind of organization that implied the notion of 'private property.' Mozi's society of impartial love was to be organized in such a way that everything would be shared and enjoyed equally among all people" (in "Mozi xue'an," 10). "At no point did Mohism give thought to an individual in particular or did it consider people separately. What it referred to as 'benefit' is in fact the benefit of humanity as a whole. All individuals ought to sacrifice their own personal interest in order for the general interest to become apparent"; "In regard to social organization, standards for what are right and wrong are considered on the social level, not the individual level. This, too, is one of his theory's shortcomings. If we were to put it briefly, it would suffice to say that Mohism only acknowledged society and that it did not acknowledge the individual" (Liang Qichao, "Xian Qin zhengzhi sixiang shi," 122, 130). These excerpts make it clear that, in finding fault with Mohism, Liang fundamentally aimed to denounce the many abuses committed by Russia's socialist regime.

nobility's authority by objecting to the practice of rites and music. Qian made the following comment regarding these different attitudes: "The Confucians were rightists only in standing against the nobility. But the Mohists were leftists themselves."⁵¹ When it came to the two movements' opposition to the nobility, Qian did not seem to take either of the two positions. Yet he remained steadfast in his criticism of Mohist doctrines. In response to statements in the *Mozi* addressing the paradox between the common people's general opposition to impartial love and their reliance on it where their own interests were concerned,⁵² Qian declared: "Everywhere on earth, the people do not agree to suffer for the sake of impartial love, but they willingly accept the happiness they can derive from other people loving impartially. When attempting to put Mohist thought into practice, this really remains an impossible problem to solve." Qian also quoted the section in the "Tian xia 天下" chapter in the *Zhuangzi* 莊子 that comments on Mozi's impartial love: "The person who instructs people to love as such, I am afraid they may not love others. For one's conduct to reflect this principle, one must not love oneself in the first place." Qian cites the *Zhuangzi* in order to support his own criticism of impartial love: "Originally intending to love all people, Mozi eventually turned toward misanthropic ways. This is why it is said that his intention was undermined by his behavior. Is that not another paradox of the deepest level found in Mohist philosophy?" Qian's general verdict regarding the Mohist teachings was that they had to contend with too many inherent contradictions. This was also the main criterion by which he assessed and compared the Confucian and the Mohist philosophies. As he put it, "Confucius is a harmony; Mozi is a tangle of conflicting ideas."⁵³ On the one hand, Qian approved of the noble spirit and character that unfolded from Mohism's project of opposing the nobility. On the other hand, he was determined to expose the inherent contradictions of Mohism. In the end, that remained Qian's basic attitude toward Mohist philosophy in general. As for Guo Moruo, he concentrated his attention on the conflict between impartial love and social order as it is in reality. He wrote: "Mozi's biggest contradiction is in simultaneously admitting that all is governed by the antagonisms brought about by hierarchical order and telling people to

51 Qian Mu 錢穆, "Mozi 墨子," in *Qian Binsi xiansheng quanji* 錢賓四先生全集 [*The Collected Works of Mr. Qian Binsi*] (Taipei: Lianjing chubanshiye youxian gongsi, 1998), 6:35.

52 This passage appears in the third part of the *Mozi's* section on impartial love: "One opposes impartial love in word yet favours those who love impartially when they are in need of help. Here, one's words and deeds definitely contradict each other." See Sun Yirang, *Mozi jiangou*, 118.

53 Qian Mu, "Mozi," 6:37, 42.

go ahead and be impartial." According to Guo, one could not abide by the premise that hierarchical social order and the conflicts it created were natural and then spread the catchphrase "impartial love." The Mohist doctrine was aimed at guiding society's unhappy majority in loving a minority of happy people. Whereas the latter enjoyed the former's love, they would only go so far as sharing a small percentage of their love. Regarding this, Guo was categorical: "This so-called impartial love is actually nothing but partial!"⁵⁴ In Guo's view, "to love impartially" should have meant eradicating society's hierarchy and antagonisms; otherwise, because it remained partial, this type of love did not deserve to be called "impartial." In "A Critique of Confucius and Mozi [*Kong Mo de pipan* 孔墨的批判]," his criticism became even more incisive: "Mozi's idea of the people was that they remained the slaves they had been in ancient days, and his idea of material goods was also they were merely properties to be owned. Therefore, when he admonished the people to love other people, that is the same as urging them to love their oxen and horses."⁵⁵ Many scholars used the terms "non-Mohist" or "anti-Mohist" to encapsulate Guo's stance against Mohism, and Cai Shangsi 蔡尚思 [1905–2008] even described him as a typical "admirer of Confucius and opponent of Mozi."⁵⁶ In fact, Guo's mainly critical posture regarding Mozi became apparent only in the 1940s, as a result of the influence of Marxist historical materialism on his writings. However, Guo's attitude regarding Mohism was not always consistent. In his early years as a writer, in particular, he showed a certain inclination toward many aspects of Mohism, including its doctrine of impartial love, its chivalrous spirit, its religious thought, and elements of science and technology that were mentioned in the *Mozi*.⁵⁷

Lastly, Liu Yizheng 柳詒徵 [1880–1956] focused his attention on one issue in particular: how the Mohist teaching of impartial love ran counter to the relationship between nature and human emotions. In comparison to the intellectuals mentioned above, Liu's criticism can be described as extreme to some

54 Guo Moruo 郭沫若, "Mozi de sixiang 墨子的思想 [Mozi's Thought]," in *Guo Moruo quanji: Lishi bian* 郭沫若全集: 歷史編 [*The Collected Works of Guo Moruo: History Series*] (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1982), 1:471.

55 Guo Moruo, "Kong Mo de pipan 孔墨的批判 [A Critique of Confucius and Mozi]," in *Guo Moruo quanji: Lishi bian*, 2:114.

56 Cai Shangsi 蔡尚思, *Shi jia lun Mo: Yaodian* 十家論墨: 要點 [*Ten Scholars on Mozi: The Key Points*] (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 2004), 8.

57 Cao Shunqing 曹順慶 and Nie Tao 聶韜, "Shi xi 'fan shen lun' dui Guo Moruo moxue taidu de yingxiang: Cong 'yang Mo' dao 'fei Mo' 試析'泛神論'对郭沫若墨學態度的影響: 從'揚墨'到'非墨' [An Attempt at Understanding Pantheism's Influence on Guo Moruo's Research on Mozi: From Pro- to Anti-Mohism]," *Beijing lianhe daxue xuebao* 北京聯合大學學報, no. 4 (2014).

degree. Liu considered impartial love impracticable at two levels. The first level, he argued, was that of nature. He wrote: "Whether it is one's grandparents or one's youngest sons, because they are naturally related to oneself, one's love for them comes instinctively; other people's elders and sons, because they are not naturally related to oneself, one instinctively feels separate from them." This was how he explained that, according to nature, one should differentiate between love for one's kin and love for others. The second level at which impartial love was impracticable had to do with the emotions of the majority of people. In Liu's view, people expressed concern and affection for others based on the degree of intimacy with them: "Emotionally speaking, people certainly do not treat others' places as they treat their own, they do not behave toward others' clans as they behave toward theirs; they do not regard others' nations as they regard their own." Because it contradicted people's nature and emotions, the doctrine of impartial love logically degenerated into an utter and dangerous lack of filial piety, and, in the end, it was indeed no different from the behavior of beasts. Obviously, Liu adamantly supported Mencius's arguments against Mozi's impartial love: "In this world, only beasts do not know that they have fathers. Only beasts and the kind of primitive people that resemble beasts in their way of living do not know they have fathers. That leads us to the direct conclusion that there is no other way to qualify Mozi's impartial love than to call it 'bestial.'" Liu condemned all methods of blurring the line between one's own father and other people's fathers. He believed that being as filial as possible to one's father was part of a particular set of moral standards that enabled a desirable social order to be maintained. Based on this presupposition, he thought Mencius's criticism was "extremely incisive." Mohism, however, aimed only to obtain material gain: "I would seek to love and benefit other people's relatives only because other people would then love and benefit my relatives. If we look at this from the other way around, when other people would not care for my own and would not benefit them, then I would have to be allowed not to care for them in return."⁵⁸ In the end, Liu summarized his thoughts as follows: the most fundamental difference between Confucianism and Mohism was that the former taught about intention and the latter about utility and interest. Mohism might have appeared to be particularly concerned with people's emotions, but, in reality, as a whole it could only be harmful to humanity. In criticizing impartial love, Liu resolutely made common cause with the Confucians.

58 Liu Yizheng 柳詒徵, "Du Mo weiyán 讀墨微言 [A Few Words on Reading Mozi]," *Xueheng* 學衡 12 (1922): 1-4.

5 Concluding Remarks

In the Republic of China, an upsurge of interest in researching Mohism was sparked by the intensification of the assault on Chinese society of Western science and the steady revelation of corruption among the Confucian elites. During that period, the various debates that concerned Mohism also touched on the relationship between Confucianism and Mohism. Although Mencius criticized Mozi's impartial love for disregarding filial piety and for encouraging "bestial" behavior, his perspective on the topic did not seem to have had an important impact because he expressed it during the Warring States [475–221 BCE] period. In the two thousand years that followed, a few scholars, for diverse reasons, may have mentioned Mencius's extreme opinion of Mozi, but, in the end, no debate was generated. Only in the Republic of China did Mohist teachings, especially the core concept of impartial love, gradually become a topic of interest for intellectuals at the time, who first were spurred by the preoccupation with Mohism by Zhang Taiyan and Liang Qichao. Mencius's criticism had been essentially sparked by fundamental differences in the philosophies advocated by Confucians and Mohists. The opinions of intellectuals in the Republic of China reflected how they positioned themselves in the clash between these two schools of thought. These different postures, in turn, emanated from particular academic and political standpoints. Zhang and Liang both maintained a relatively complicated attitude toward Mohism's impartial love: although they both praised the principle at some point in their lives, in the end, their perspective was firmly aligned with Confucianism, and they both abandoned the idea of impartial love. Wu Leichuan, Wang Zhixin, Wu Feibai, Chen Guyuan, Lang Qingxiao, and the different factions in the New Culture movement may have had different outlooks on the issue of impartial love, but they all attempted to defend Mozi's doctrine. Their respective motives ranged from a perceived need to promote Christian teachings to a desire to transform society. Regardless, they all expressed different attitudes toward the competing schools of Confucianism and Mohism, and toward Confucian tradition in general. Among the intellectuals opposed to the Mohist doctrine of impartial love, Qian Mu, Guo Moruo, and Liu Yizheng stood out for their strident views. Not only did they offer scathing criticisms of the doctrine, but they also categorically refused to acknowledge any connections or relationship between Confucianism and Mohism. In the end, the most moderate and generous among them were Xie Wuliang, Sun Deqian, and Chen Zhu, who all attempted to protect the image of Mencius while fighting for Mohism's impartial love to be considered and discussed again.

Translated by Kathryn Henderson

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On the Mohist Critique of Other Pre-Qin Schools of Philosophy

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Abstract

Mohism was the first ideology in the pre-Qin period to engage in open critique. Although it shared a common origin with Confucianism, Mohists criticized Confucianism by claiming that “in the teaching of the Confucians there are four elements sufficient to ruin the empire.” Later students of Mohism went so far as to launch personal attacks against Confucius, the founder of Confucianism. Mohist discourse on the concepts of “universal love,” “exalting worthiness,” “reverence for ghosts,” and “opposition to fatalism” mostly aimed at criticizing the philosopher Yang Zhu, especially his concepts of “action in one’s self-interest,” “not exalting worthiness,” “disbelief in ghosts,” and “resting content in the dispositions of one’s inborn nature.” Although, at the time of the Mohists, the schools of thought on yin-yang, diplomacy, legalism, names or logic, agriculture, and syncretism had not officially formed, some of their concepts and ideologies had already begun to emerge. As a result, the *Mozi* contains many criticisms of them.

Keywords

critique – Mohism – pre-Qin philosophy

As an important intellectual trend in philosophy in the pre-Qin period [before 221 BCE], the Mohist school was intimately bound up with the Nine Trends and Ten Schools [*jiuliu shijia* 九流十家]. It came under fierce criticism by many scholarly circles in ancient China, including Mencius [372–289 BCE] and Xunzi 荀子 [ca. 313–238 BCE], who are commonly associated with Confucianism,

as well as Yangzi 楊子 [395–335 BCE] and Zhuangzi 莊子 [ca. 369–286 BCE], who are commonly associated with Daoism. However, the terms Confucian Mohism [*Ru-Mo* 儒墨 or *Kong-Mo* 孔墨] and Yangzian Mohism [*Yang-Mo* 楊墨] were in common use at the time. Thus, as noted in the chapter “Overview of the Essentials [*Yaoliue* 要略]” in the *Masters from Huainan* [*Huainanzi* 淮南子], the notion that “Mozi studied the teachings of the Confucians and accepted Confucian thought”¹ seems to have been profoundly influential.

Mohist thought has experienced a revival in the modern era. Granted, most scholars have limited their examination to comparisons of Confucianism and Mohism and discussions about their mutual contrasts and initial relationship. However, many scholars have offered in-depth discussions on the links between Mohism and other intellectual streams such as Daoism, the school of names or logic [*ming* 名], legalism [*fa* 法], and the school of yin-yang 陰陽. For example, with respect to the relationship between Mohism and Daoism, scholars believe that the Mohist concepts of “universal love” [*jian'ai* 兼愛], “moderation in use” [*jieryong* 節用], and “opposition to offensive warfare” [*feigong* 非攻] stemmed from the Daoist concepts of “kindness” [*ci* 慈], “frugality” [*jian* 儉], and “fear of being the first in the world” [*bugan wei tianxia xian* 不敢為天下先].² Later Mohist criticism of the pre-Qin philosophies was directed mainly at the tendency toward “sophistry” [*guibian* 詭辯] of the School of Logic (also called the school of names) and the Lao-Zhuang [*laozhuang* 老莊] tradition of Daoism.³ Regarding the relationship between Mohism and the school of logic, although some scholars deny the existence of the school of logic in the pre-Qin period, even more scholars affirm the link between the Mohism (especially late Mohism) and the school of logic, and some even contend that the school of logic originated in Mohism and was merely an offshoot of it.⁴ Regarding the relationship between Mohism and legalism, scholars believe that, although the Legalist advocacy of “discarding form and exalting essence” [*qiwen shangzhi* 棄文尚質] and centralizing power structures differs from the “exalting unity” [*shangtong* 尚同] and “valuing frugality” [*guijian*

1 Liu Wendian 劉文典, *Huainan honglie jijie* 淮南鴻烈集解 [Collected Explanations of the Huainanzi], coll. Feng Yi 馮逸 and Qiao Hua 喬華 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1989), 862–63.

2 Jiang Quan 江璩, *Duzi zhiyan* 讀子卮言 [Incoherent Words on Reading the Masters] (Shanghai: Huadong shifan daxue chubanshe, 2012), 69; Chen Zhu 陳柱, *Moxue shilun* 墨學十論 [Ten Essays on Mohist Scholarship] (Shanghai: Huadong shifan daxue chubanshe, 2015), 117.

3 Feng Youlan 馮友蘭, *Zhongguo zhhexueshi xinbian* 中國哲學史新編 [A New Account of the History of Chinese Philosophy] (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 2007), 1:467–72.

4 Hu Shi 胡適, *Zhongguo zhhexue dagang* 中國哲學大綱 [An Outline of Chinese Philosophy] (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1997), 135; Lü Simian 呂思勉, *Xianqin xueshu gailun* 先秦學術概論 [Introduction to Pre-Qin Scholarship] (Changsha: Yuelu shushe, 2010), 94.

貴儉] theories of Mohism, an initial historical relationship can be found between them.⁵

Various studies have been conducted on the relationship between Mohism and the pre-Qin philosophies. Some of them are in depth, especially those that examine the relationship between Confucianism and Mohism, but they have had obvious shortcomings. First, these investigations have not been sufficiently comprehensive or systematic. They have tended to examine the relationship between Mohism and Confucianism, Daoism, the school of logic, or legalism, but rarely look at others. Second, these studies are mostly static comparisons of Mohist thought with other schools of thought; as such, they rarely examine the relationship between the Mohism and other schools of thought from the perspective of “letting the hundred schools of thought contend” [*baijia zhengming* 百家爭鳴]. In other words, scholarly criticism and ideological confrontation are perspectives that are often overlooked.

In light of this, in this article we provide a comprehensive and systematic review of the relationship between Mohism and the other pre-Qin philosophies from the perspective of Mohist criticism and contention and confrontation with other pre-Qin schools of thought. The goal is new explorations in the study of Mohism and other pre-Qin schools.

1 The Relationship between Confucianism and Mohism

Although Mohist criticism of Confucianism abounds, Mohism and Confucianism in fact have a common origin. According to the chapter “Overview of the Essentials” in the *Huainanzi*, “[Mozi] studied the teachings of the Confucians and accepted Confucian thought.” Some scholars believe that in this sentence, “study” [*xue* 學] and “accept” [*shou* 受] do not infer a teacher-student relationship but, rather, portray the reading of Confucian texts.⁶ However, based on the author’s textual research, a case can be made that Mozi 墨子 was born and died between 525–520 BCE and 438 BCE, which is roughly twenty to thirty years earlier than Confucius [551–479 BCE]. The “Biographies of Mencius and Xun Qing [*Mengzi Xun Qing liezhuan* 孟子荀卿列傳]” in the *Records of the Grand Historian* [*Shiji* 史記] state: “Some say he was contemporaneous with

5 Chen Zhu 陳柱, *Zhuzi gailun: Wai yi zhong* 諸子概論：外一種 [Introduction to the Pre-Qin Philosophers: An Additional Version] (Shanghai: Huadong shifan daxue chubanshe, 2015), 320.

6 Chen Zhu, *Zhuzi gailun*, 137.

Confucius, while others say he lived sometime after Confucius.”⁷ The lifespans given for Mozi here both hold water. It is also entirely possible that Confucius lived from 552 BCE to 479 BCE and that Mozi once studied with Confucius.⁸

In addition, according to the relevant studies, much of Mohist thought can be found to have originated with Confucius and related Confucian ideology. For example, some scholars have argued, “The sole doctrine of Mozi was ‘universal love.’”⁹ However, Confucius spoke many times on the theme. In the chapter “Studying and Practicing [*Xue'er* 學而]” in the *Analects*, Confucius is recorded as admonishing his followers thus: “When in front of your parents, be filial to them; when outside the home, show respect to your male peers; speak little, but when you do, be honest and credible; show fraternity to the people and get close to those who have empathy.”¹⁰ Here, “showing fraternity to people” in general is originally written *fan'ai* 汎愛, which can also be read as equivalent to *jian'ai*. The chapter “There Is Yong [*Yongye* 雍也]” also speaks of “providing wide-ranging benefits to the people and helping them live well.”¹¹ These quotations demonstrate that a concept of universal love was in fact espoused by Confucians. Moreover, this ideological proposition was actually put forward before Mozi and should be seen as the origin of Mohist doctrine. Scholars in the modern era, such as Zhang Caitian 張采田 [1874–1945] and Chen Zhu 陳柱 [1890–1944], have argued that not only universal love but also “exalting worthiness” [*shangxian* 尚賢], “opposition to fatalism” [*feiming* 非命], “moderation in use,” and “perceptive ghosts” [*minggui* 明鬼] can be found to have originated in Confucianism, contending that “Confucius is the one who taught and transmitted these ideas,” which “were not carried forward until the time of Mozi.”¹²

Thus, it can be argued that Mohism originated in Confucianism and that their basic ideas are closely bound up with one another. That being the case, why would Mozi and Mohists criticize Confucius and his followers?

7 Sima Qian 司馬遷, *Shiji* 史記 [Records of the Grand Historian], comm. Pei Yin 裴駟, Sima Zhen 司馬貞, and Zhang Shoujie 張守節 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2014), 7:2855.

8 Gao Huaping 高華平, “Mozi shengzunian xinkao 墨子生卒年新考 [New Studies on the Dates of Birth and Death of Mozi],” *Jiangxi shifan daxue xuebao* 江西師範大學學報, no. 5 (2018).

9 Chen Zhu, *Zhuzi gailun*, 312.

10 Zhu Xi 朱熹, *Sishu zhangju jizhu* 四書章句集注 [Collected Commentaries on the Four Books Arranged in Sections and Sentences] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983), 49.

11 Zhu Xi, *Sishu zhangju jizhu*, 91.

12 Chen Zhu, *Zhuzi gailun*, 309–10. See also Wang Pinzhen 王聘珍, *Da dai lijiegu* 大戴禮記解詁 [Explanations and Philological Assessments of the Ritual Record of the Elder Dai], coll. Wang Wenjin 王文錦 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983), 155–57.

Could it be, as some scholars claim, that “the meaning of *ru* as ‘having integrity’ or ‘having techniques of the Way’ does not exclusively refer to Confucianism,” that “Mozi was not anti-Confucian,” and that the “opposition to Confucianism” discussed in the *Mozi* “was not the original idea of Mozi”?¹³ The reasons that this is not the case are as follows.

First, according to the chapter “Overview of the Essentials” in the *Huainanzi*, as well as accounts in the *Mozi*, the anti-Confucian tendency in Mohism was not a repudiation of all points of view in Confucianism. Rather, it was merely disapproval of some of the Confucian ideas and methods. The chapter says that Mozi believed that “Their rituals were complicated and tedious; expensive funerals cost considerable amounts of money and throw the people into poverty; long-term mourning hurts lives and hinders political affairs.”¹⁴ What Mozi opposed was in fact some of the Confucian rites and rituals, not the Confucian ideology as a whole. In the chapter “Against Confucianism Ⅱ [*Feiru xia* 非儒下],” what is criticized is in fact “long-term mourning,” “stubborn insistence on fatalism,” “overly elaborate rites and music,” and “the man of integrity [*junzi* 君子] emulating his predecessors and not innovating,” as well as the concepts that “the man of integrity who is victorious in battle does not chase deserters.”¹⁵ Some of the behavior of Confucius also comes under fire. However, there is no criticism of concepts that are core to the Confucian belief system, such as humaneness [*ren* 仁], dutifulness [*yi* 義], rites [*li* 禮], wisdom [*zhi* 智], trustworthiness [*xin* 信], and sageliness [*sheng* 聖].

Further, some of Mozi’s views that were critical of Confucianism probably concerned particular situations at specific times and places, a point that Mozi once made. The chapter “Inner Assortment of Parables I: The Seven Tactics [*Neichu shuo shang qishu* 內儲說上七術]” in the *Han Fei zi* 韓非子 records that, during the time of Duke Huan of Qi 齊桓公 [r. 685–643 BCE], “The domain of Qi regularly held elaborate funerals. Cotton and silk were used to dress the deceased, while timber was used for the coffins. Duke Huan was very concerned about this, and informed Guan Zhong of his concerns.”¹⁶ This shows that elaborate funerals and lengthy mourning had already become customary during Duke Huan’s reign. Mozi’s criticism of these practices may have also been directed at the social customs of the time; the phrase “upon entering a

13 Chen Zhu, *Zhuzi gailun*, 137.

14 Liu Wendian, *Huainan honglie jijie*, 862–63.

15 Sun Yirang 孫詒讓, *Mozi jiangou* 墨子閒詁 [*Inquiries and Interpretations of Mozi*], coll. Sun Qizhi 孫啟治 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2001), 286–306.

16 Liang Qixiong 梁啟雄, *Hanzi qianjie* 韓子淺解 [*A Brief Interpretation of the Han Fei zi*] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2009), 238.

country, one must choose the most pressing matter to advise on,”¹⁷ for example, was not merely targeted at Confucian ideology. In other words, there was no fixed pattern in which Mozi criticized particular ideas or doctrines in particular circumstances. His criticism of Confucian thought and behavior only expressed disapproval of extravagance and waste, as well as fatalistic discourse, both of which he saw as caused by the excessive practice of rites. Moreover, this was still proposed under the premise of “a country in poverty” [*guo pin* 國貧] whose leaders were guilty of “loving music and indulging in liquor.” In the context of “a country in poverty,” not only Confucianism but indeed any support for red tape that was extravagant and wasteful became a target of “opposition” [*fei* 非] by Mohists. In the context of the time, Confucianism used its status as a “prominent area of learning” [*xianxue* 顯學] to promote elaborate funerals, lengthy mourning, rituals and music, and the concept of “divine will” [*tianming* 天命]. Because Mozi wanted to criticize the extravagance of the world at that time, it is likely that some social customs were labeled as Confucian. As a matter of course, he criticized what he perceived as the mistakes of Confucianism and attempted to expose inherent contradictions in the words and deeds of its founder, Confucius.

In addition, at the time of Confucius and Mozi, the scholarly discourse in ancient China was still developing. It was commonplace for the various schools to argue with and criticize one another, and this occurred even between Confucius and his disciples. The “Biographies of Confucius’s Disciples” [*Zhongni dizi liezhuan* 仲尼弟子列傳] in the *Records of the Grand Historian* states: “Zilu has a simple-minded temperament. He is brave, strong-willed, and forthright. He wears a rooster hat on his head and carries a sword decorated with boar skin. He once bullied Confucius.”¹⁸ However, this “bullying” should not be understood as physical assault but, rather, a kind of unceremonious attack on Confucius’s way of thinking.

The “Yang Huo 陽貨” chapter in the *Analects* says that Zai Wo 宰我 [522–458 BCE], a prominent disciple of Confucius, had a completely negative attitude toward Confucian funeral rites. He believed not only that “sustained periods of mourning hurt the living and hinder ordinary business” but also that the practice “threw the system of rites into chaos” [*lihuai* 禮壞] and “caused a collapse in the cultural order” [*yuebeng* 樂崩].¹⁹ Essentially, he saw it as contributing directly to “the wrecking of rituals and the destruction of music.” Thus, some scholars argue that Zai Wo “can almost be considered a member of the Mohist

17 Sun Yirang, *Mozi jiangou*, 475.

18 Sima Qian, *Shiji*, 2664.

19 Zhu Xi, *Sishu zhangju jizhu*, 181–82.

school.”²⁰ In fact, the chapter “Against Confucianism” in the *Mozi* is critical of behavior that violates the tenets of humaneness, dutifulness, loyalty, and trustworthiness advocated by Confucius. Although the chapter “Interrogating Mohists [Jiemo 詰墨]” in the *Anthology of the Kong Family Masters* [Kongcongzi 孔叢子] defended this charge, this does not change the fact that Confucius’s behavior was questioned and criticized at that time.

Moreover, this kind of questioning and controversy often does not come from schools of thought other than Confucianism but, rather, from Confucius’s own disciples. The “Yang Huo” chapter in the *Analects* also says that “Gongshan Furaο was entrenched in the territory of Bi and planning a rebellion. He summoned Confucius and Confucius prepared to go.... Bi Xi summoned Confucius, and Confucius prepared to go.” Zi Lu 子路 [542–480 BCE], one of Confucius’s best-known and most faithful disciples, expressed his disapproval of these events.²¹ The primary reason that Confucius’s behavior often contradicted the kind of morality and justice he promoted, and gave rise to doubts, criticism, and ridicule by others – including his own students – might be his own contradictions but also the irreconcilable conflict between the moral principles that Confucius insisted on and the political ideals he pursued. Even his disciples often criticized his thoughts, propositions, words, and deeds. Therefore, it is not impossible or completely incomprehensible for Mozi – who “studied the teachings of the Confucians and accepted Confucian thought” – to write an anti-Confucian chapter.

Furthermore, even though Confucius, as the founder of Confucianism, studied under Laozi, the founder of Daoism, he ultimately parted ways with the Daoists, giving up the concept of “unworked wood” [*pu* 樸] for “refined form” [*wen* 文], rejecting Daoist’s simple and unadorned ways and worshipping King Wen 周文王 [r. 1105–1056 BCE], King Wu 周武王 [r. 1050–1043 BCE], and the Duke of Zhou 周公 [d. 1033 BCE]. The chapter “Xian Asked [*Xianwen* 憲問]” in the *Analects* recounts: “Someone said, ‘What do you think of repaying a wrong with kindness?’ Confucius said, ‘How, then, can kindness be repaid? To repay a wrong, one uses one’s moral integrity. To repay kindness, one uses kindness.’”²² “Using kindness to repay a wrong” [*yide baoyuan* 以德報怨] appears in chapter 62 of the received version of the *Laozi*. Here, the *Analects* states this as “someone said” [*huoyue* 或曰]. In his *Later Notes on the Analects* [*Lunyu hou’an* 論語後案], Huang Shisan 黃式三 [1789–1862], an eminent scholar in the Qing dynasty [1616–1911] points out that the concept of “using kindness to repay a

20 Chen Zhu, *Zhuzi gailun*, 193.

21 Zhu Xi, *Sishu zhangju jizhu*, 177–78.

22 Zhu Xi, *Sishu zhangju jizhu*, 158.

wrong” is in fact Laozian in origin.²³ Thus it is evident that Confucius’s phrase “to repay kindness, one uses kindness” is an ideological challenge to Laozi. In light of the fact that Confucius and his disciples were apt to criticize their teacher directly, for Mozi – who studied the teachings of the Confucians and accepted Confucian thought – to express anti-Confucian sentiments is conceivable. Naturally, perhaps only the first half of “Against Confucianism II” in the extant *Mozi* contains Mozi’s own views, whereas the second half should be seen as a product of post-Qin Mohists. This point is elaborated below.

2 The Anti-Confucian Positions of Mozi and His Followers

The chapter “Gong Meng 公孟” in the *Mozi* contains the criticism that “the teaching of the Confucians has four elements that are sufficient to ruin the empire,” which are “the Heavens are unintelligent, and ghosts do not have spiritual powers,” “holding elaborate funerals and mourning for the dead for long periods of time,” “being accustomed to song and dance,” and “life is preordained.”²⁴ In the extant documents, criticism of Confucianism by the Mohists is fully reflected in the chapter “Against Confucianism” in the *Mozi*. However, although Mozi theoretically and logically may have been against Confucians and Confucius, this cannot be interpreted as Mozi having been against Confucians and Confucius in reality. To determine whether Mozi was in fact against Confucians and Confucius, one needs to examine both the theory and logic and, more importantly, whether the historical sources have a basis for this interpretation.

The chapter “Against Confucianism II” in the *Mozi* is remarkable in terms of its structure and content: the first half is anti-Confucian, while its second half is anti-Confucius. Note also that, one paragraph after “Confucians say,” it reads: “Those who insist that life is preordained contend that ...” Being out of harmony with the rest of the passage, it appears to have been erroneously transplanted from the chapter “Against Fatalism [*Feiming* 非命].” The first half of the chapter begins with “Confucians say” and “and also say.” First, it describes the views of Confucians, and then it criticizes each of the views one by one. The second half of the chapter begins “All techniques of the Way and learning have their roots in humaneness” and censures the “mutual contradictions” of “the

23 Cheng Shude 程樹德, *Lunyu jishi* 論語集釋 [Collected Annotations on the Analects], coll. Cheng Junying 程俊英 and Jiang Jianyuan 蔣見元 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1990), 1313.

24 Sun Yirang, *Mozi jiangou*, 458.

conduct of Confucius” and his support for humaneness.²⁵ Thus, many modern scholars have argued that “Against Confucianism I,” from “All techniques of the Way and learning have their roots in humaneness” onward, that argues against the conduct of Confucius, was already compromised by later generations that they cannot reflect Mozi’s thought. For instance, the renowned scholar and Mozi specialist Wu Yujiang 吳毓江 [1898–1977] stated that the segment “differs remarkably from the argument presented in the preceding text, and does not resemble a [coherent] text, and so we suspect that is an insertion or alteration made by later generations, and that it cannot be dated to the formative period of the *Mozi*.”²⁶

The chapter “Boundless Discourses [*Silun xun* 汎論訓]” in the *Huainanzi* gives the following remarks on the dispute between Confucianism and Mohism: “Singing to stringed instruments and dancing to drums so as to make music; turning, bestowing, diminishing, yielding so as to practice the rites; having lavish burials and lengthy mourning so as to send off the dead: These were established by Confucius, but Mozi opposed them.”²⁷ This shows that, at the time of Confucius and Mozi, Confucius’s most influential ideas were those on music, rites, and funerary and mourning practices, and the first half of the chapter “Against Confucianism II” is aimed precisely at these aspects of Confucianism.

It could be argued that Mohist criticism of Confucianism – either by Mozi or by others at the time of Mozi – was entirely a criticism of Confucius’s scholarly views and that no trace can be found of a personal attack on Confucius. Thus, the received version of the “Gong Meng” chapter in the *Mozi* records a lengthy conversation between Mozi and the Confucian Gong Meng, in which Mozi criticizes various aspects of Confucian thought. However, the thrust of this criticism is identical to that in the “Against Confucianism” chapter, merely limited to the contradictions of Confucianism, such as that “poverty, wealth, longevity, and untimely death are preordained,” that elaborate burials and long-term mourning must be carried out, and that “sacrificial rites are essential learning” despite an absence of belief in ghosts.²⁸ These are not attacks on Confucius as an individual. The situation is similar in the chapter “Geng Zhu

25 Sun Yirang, *Mozi jiangou*, 286–306.

26 Wu Yujiang 吳毓江, *Mozi jiaozhu* 墨子校注 [*The Mozi with Collated Commentaries*], coll. Sun Qizhi 孫啟治 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2001), 433.

27 Liu Wendian, *Huainan honglie jijie*, 524. Translation modified from John S. Major, Sarah A. Queen, Andrew Seth Meyer, and Harold D. Roth, *The Huainanzi: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Government in Early Han China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 13:9. – Trans.

28 Sun Yirang, *Mozi jiangou*, 454, 456.

耕柱” in the *Mozi*. In fact, Mozi believed that “that which is reasonable and cannot be changed” should be “praised.”²⁹

However, by the mid- to late Warring States period [475–221 BCE] significant changes had occurred in the criticism of Confucian thought by later followers of Mohism. What was originally scholarly criticism had turned into condemnation of Confucianism and even personal attacks on Confucians themselves. According to the chapter “Equalizing Assessments of Things [*Qiwu lun* 齊物論]” in the *Zhuangzi* 莊子, the dispute between Confucianism and Mohism had reached a stage in which “each side would affirm what the other side denied and deny what the side party affirmed.”³⁰ More importantly, in the second part of the chapter “Against Confucianism II,” the Mohists called Confucius by his first name, Qiu 丘, and accused him of being inhumane and undutiful. Evidently, their merciless mocking went beyond the criticism in the *Zhuangzi* and exhibited a Legalist tone resembling the *Han Fei zi*.

In the early stages, Mohist criticism of Confucian thought was mainly targeted at Confucian support for song and dance, performative rites, and elaborate funerals and long-term mourning practices as manifestations of filial piety. The following chapters of the *Mozi* contain critiques of this conduct: “Moderation in Use [*Jieyong* 節用],” “Moderation in Funerals [*Jiezang* 節葬],” and “Condemning Music [*Feiyue* 非樂].” “Condemning Music” defines the following standard for the behavior of a “humane man” [*renren* 仁人]: “[He] must strive for the benefit of the empire and seek to eliminate all calamities throughout it.” Thereafter it is written: “There are three kinds of suffering among the people: the hungry cannot get food, the cold cannot get clothes, and the working cannot get rest.”³¹ Here, Mozi is not so much criticizing Confucian music theory as he is criticizing the extravagant and hedonistic lifestyle of the upper class at the time. Likewise, it is not so much an academic criticism of the social ethos and artistic viewpoints of the time as it is a kind of social criticism of these topics.

The chapters “Moderation in Use,” and “Moderation in Funerals III” seem to advocate the Mohist concept of valuing frugality. However, the structure of the *Mozi* requires that every topic receive supportive and critical treatment, and the topic of Confucians’ “excessive rites” [*fanli* 繁禮] is no exception. The “Bibliographic Treatise [*Yiwenzhi* 藝文志]” in the *History of the Han* [*Hanshu* 漢書] says that, in order to emulate the ancient kings Yao 堯, Shun 舜, Yu 禹,

29 Sun Yirang, *Mozi jiangou*, 460.

30 Guo Qingfan 郭慶藩, *Zhuangzi jishi* 莊子集釋 [*Collected Annotations on the Zhuangzi*], coll. Wang Xiaoyu 王孝魚 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2012), 63.

31 Sun Yirang, *Mozi jiangou*, 251.

Wen, and Wu, followers of Mohism lived moderate and frugal lives in “cogon-grass-roof structures with rafters made from gathered wood” and that “upon seeing the advantages of living frugally became opposed to proprieties.”³² In other words, contrary to the positive arguments of Mohism on moderation in use, moderation in funerals, and valuing frugality, the *Mozi* actually presents a condemnation and criticism of Confucian rites, perceiving them as unnecessarily complicated expressions of propriety during social interactions.

Like *Mozi*'s criticism of Confucian views on music, Mohist criticism of Confucian ritualism is not a theoretical criticism but mainly a criticism of the social effect of what is seen as the unnecessarily complicated expressions of propriety and tediously elaborate rites advocated by Confucians. Thus it is a social criticism that contends that “the rites are excessive” and that “the increased costs are not in the interests of the people.” Further, although Confucius took rites, rituals, and propriety very seriously in an effort to reinstate the “rites of Zhou” [*Zhou li* 周禮], when Lin Fang 林放 from Lu [1043–255 BCE] asked about their essential nature, he responded, “When it comes to general etiquette, it is better to be frugal than to be lavish; when it comes to funeral rites, it is better to be sorrowful than to be extravagant.”³³ That is, Confucius did not blindly emphasize complexity and embellishment of ritual forms. Therefore, *Mozi*'s criticism of Confucian ritualism could not have been specifically directed at Confucius himself; it should have been directed at “vulgar Confucians” [*suru* 俗儒] who saw official rules and formalities as eye-catching images to project to the outside world.

The academic criticism of Confucianism by Mohists in the later period would have occurred mainly in the Qin [770–207 BCE] state during the mid- to late Warring States period. Opinions differ as to when Mohism was introduced in Qin. The Chinese-American scholar Ping-ti Ho 何炳棣 [1917–2012] believed that it occurred when Duke Xiao of Qin 秦孝公 [r. 361–338 BCE] appointed Duke Xian of Qin 秦獻公 [r. 384–362 BCE] before the reforms of Shang Yang 商鞅 [ca. 395–338 BCE]. It is reasonable to claim that a large number of Mohists could have gathered in Qin before Duke Xiao authorized these reforms.³⁴ The chapters “Biding One's Time [*Shoushi* 首時],” “Doing Away with Selfishness

32 Chen Guoqing 陳國慶, ed., *Hanshu yiwenzhi zhushi huibian* 漢書藝文志注釋彙編 [*Commentaries and Elucidations on the Bibliographic Treatise of the History of the Han*] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983), 144–45.

33 Zhu Xi, *Sishu zhangju jizhu*, 62.

34 He Bingdi 何炳棣, “Guoshi shang de ‘dashi yinyuan’ jiemi: Cong chongjian Qin-Mo shishi rushou 國史上的‘大事因緣’解謎 – 從重建秦墨史實入手 [Revealing the ‘Causality of Major Events’ in Chinese History: Starting with the Reconstruction of the Historical Facts Surrounding the Mohists in Qin],” *Guangming ribao* 光明日報, June 3, 2010.

[*Qusi* 去私],” and “Rooting Out Bias [*Quyou* 去宥]” in *Master Lü’s Spring and Autumn Annals* [*Lüshi chunqiu* 呂氏春秋] contain records about Tian Jiu 田鳩, Xiezi 謝子, Tang Guguo 唐姑果, and Fu Tun 腹蘄 – described as “Mohists from the East” and “Mohists of Qin” – meeting King Hui of Qin 秦惠王 [r. 337–311 BCE]. This demonstrates how active the Mohists were in Qin at that time. Mohists presumably gathered there because of Qin’s promotion of the “rule of law” [*fazhi* 法治] after the enactment of Shang Yang’s reforms. Granted, Shang Yang’s policies were tyrannical. People were punished for being related to or friendly with someone who had broken the law. Rewards were also given for reporting traitors and recounting military exploits. Thus, they did conflict with the Mohist principle of universal love and the condemnation of offensive warfare. However, the reforms also had a utilitarian purpose. They encouraged agricultural production, rewarded farming and weaving, advocated the banning of the *Book of Songs* [*Shijing* 詩經] and the *Book of Documents* [*Shujing* 書經] and other Confucian elements seen as detrimental to the interests of the empire, called the “six lice” [*liushi* 六蝨]. All these are completely consistent with the ideological propositions of Mohism. By the time of Xunzi, there were “no Confucians”³⁵ throughout Qin, as the Legalist ideology played a central role in its governance. Statesmen such as Han Fei 韓非 [ca. 280–233 BCE] and Li Si 李斯 [ca. 280 BCE–208 BCE] denounced Confucians as one of the “five vermin” [*wudu* 五蠹] and constantly questioned Confucius’s words and deeds. They even went so far as to contend that “the emperor shall make decisions on all matters regardless of their severity” and adopted anti-Confucian policies aimed at “burning the books and burying the scholars.”³⁶ At this time, the attitude of the Qin Mohists toward Confucianism tended to merge with that of the Legalists from the Qin and Jin [1033–376 BCE] states. In this regard, we only need to look at the attitude of Mohism in the *Han Fei zi* and compare the “censuring” [*jienan* 詰難] of Confucius in the “Against Confucianism II” chapter in the *Mozi* to related content in the *Han Fei zi* to see that the two are consistent.

For example, in the *Han Fei zi*, the chapter “Collected Persuasions II [*Shuolin xia* 說林下]” says that Confucius once asked his disciples, “Who can tell me the way Zixi made his name?”³⁷ This can be read as demonstrating Confucius’s snobbish tendencies. Further, the chapter “Inner Assortment of

35 Wang Xianqian 王先謙, *Xunzi jijie* 荀子集解 [*Collected Explanations of the Xunzi*], coll. Shen Xiaohuan 沈嘯寰 and Wang Xingxian 王星賢 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1988), 304.

36 Sima Qian, *Shiji*, 325.

37 Translation modified from W. K. Liao and Zhang Jue, *Library of Chinese Classics: Han Fei Zi II* (Beijing: Commercial Press, 2015), 623. – Trans.

Parables I: The Seven Tactics” states that Confucius praised “the punishments of the late Shang dynasty for dumping ashes on the road,” which demonstrates that Confucius advocated severe legal penalties. The chapter “Criticisms of the Ancients I [*Nanyi* 難一]” says: “How reasonable it must be that Duke Wen became hegemonic ruler! Zhongni, when making this remark, did not know the right way to reward people.”³⁸ Likewise, the chapter “Criticisms of the Ancients II” states: “After he [King Wen] had waged these three campaigns, King Zhou came to dislike him. Afraid thereof, he offered to present the King with the land to the west of the Luo river and the country of the Red Soil, all together a thousand square *li* in area, and asked him to abolish the punishment for climbing the roasting pillar.” This contends that Confucius’s praise of King Wen’s punishment was excessive. Lastly, the chapter “Criticisms of the Ancients III” criticizes Confucius for describing the exchange between Lord Ye 葉公 [ca. 550–470 BCE] and Lord Ai of Lu 魯哀公 [r. 494–468 BCE] on governance as “state-ruining sayings.”³⁹ Thus, it appears that the censuring of Confucius in the first half of “Against Confucianism II” transpired during the controversy between Confucianism and Mohism in the late Warring States period. It may even have arisen at the confluence of legalism and Mohism around the time that Qin unified China – specifically, not long before Kong Fu 孔鮒 [ca. 264–208 BCE] wrote the chapter “Interrogating Mohists” in the *Anthology of the Kong Family Masters*.

3 The Mohist Critique of Daoism

The motivations of the Mohists are depicted in the preceding paragraphs from the perspective of “valuing frugality.” However, this ideological stance is not unique to the Mohists; other pre-Qin schools shared this tendency. Consider, for instance, Daoism in the pre-Qin period. Chapter 65 in the *Laozi* says: “I have three treasures that I keep with me: one called kindness, the second frugality, and the third fear of being the first in the world.”⁴⁰ Here, frugality

38 Translation modified from Liao and Zhang, *Library of Chinese Classics*, 4:1487. – Trans.

39 Translation modified from W. K. Liao and Zhang Jue, *Library of Chinese Classics*, 4:1581. – Trans.

40 Wang Bi 王弼, annot., Lou Yulie 樓宇烈, coll., *Laozi Daodejing zhu jiaoshi* 老子道德經註校釋 [*Commentary and Collated Annotations on Laozi’s Daodejing*] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2008), 170. Translation modified from Zhao Yanchun 趙彥春, *Daodejing yingyi* 道德經英譯 [*An English Translation of the Daodejing*] (Beijing: Gaodeng jiaoyu chubanshe, 2018), 96. – Trans.

is regarded as one of the “three precious things” [*sanbao* 三寶]. At least during the formation of the various chapters in the *Mozi*, Mohism absorbed some ideas from Daoism. The chapter “Lie Yukou 列禦寇” in the *Zhuangzi* states that when Zhuangzi’s death was imminent, his disciples wished to hold an elaborate funeral, to which Zhuangzi responded: “From above, the crows and eagles will eat me; below, the ants will eat me: to take from one and give to another would only show your partiality.”⁴¹ The two are not all that different, and an “elaborate funeral” has little meaning. What Zhuangzi had to say about simple burials is strikingly similar to that of Mozi. This shows that they both accepted and rejected Daoism as they deemed fit.

Describing the dispute between Confucians and Mohists, the “Boundless Discourses” chapter in the *Huainanzi* states: “The concepts of universal love, exalting worthiness, reverence for the ghosts, and opposition to fatalism were all advocated by Mozi, but Yangzi was opposed to them.”⁴² Some have claimed that Mozi was criticizing Confucians, but the object of Mozi’s criticism was not a particular individual but, rather, the opposing ideas espoused by Yangzi. Because, during the scholarly contention between Yangzi and Mozi, Yangzi targeted Mozi and Mohist ideas, so it is unlikely that Mozi and Mohism would promote their views and turn a deaf ear to the criticisms of Yangzi and his followers about their views. On the contrary, they would have launched a counterattack against the Yang school as directly as possible.

The extant version of the *Liezi* 列子 includes a chapter called “Yang Zhu 楊朱” that outlines the thought of Yangzi. Its authenticity has long been subject to dispute. However, as pointed out by Hu Shi 胡適 [1891–1962], “It seems that the chapter ‘Yang Zhu’ was compiled from various ancient sources with the aim of rebuilding the lost text,”⁴³ Liang Qichao 梁啟超 [1873–1929] believed, “This chapter appears to be generally reliable.”⁴⁴ In the “Yang Zhu” chapter, Yang Zhu’s ideological claim on the aforementioned ideas seems to be the opposite of that of Mozi, and the difference between Qin Guli 禽滑釐 [470–400 BCE] and Yang Zhu is also seen there. This shows that Mozi’s tendency to “refute Yang” at that time was not fictitious.

41 Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi jishi*, 1063. Translation modified from James Legge, *The Sacred Books of China* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1879), 1–2:38. – Trans.

42 Liu Wendian, *Huainan honglie jiji*, 524.

43 Hu Shi, *Zhongguo zhixue dagang*, 126.

44 Liang Qichao 梁啟超, *Laozi, Kongzi, Mozi ji qi xuepai* 老子、孔子、墨子及其學派 [*Laozi, Confucius, Mozi, and Their Schools of Thought*] (Beijing: Beijing chubanshe, 2016), 272.

It is also notable that Yang Zhu inherited and developed the Laozian theory of health preservation. The chapter “Duke Wen of Teng II [*Teng Wen Gong xia* 滕文公下]” in the *Mencius* 孟子 says, “Yang Zhu’s advocacy for self-preservation showed disregard for the ruler.”⁴⁵ The chapter “Fathoming the Mind I [*Jinxin shang* 盡心上]” comments on the same idea: “Yangzi’s chief concern is the self; if pulling out a single hair could benefit the empire, he would not do it.”⁴⁶ The chapter “Avoiding Duplicity [*Bu'er* 不二]” in the *Spring and Autumn Annals* [*Chunqiu* 春秋] notes that “Yang Zhu valued the self.”⁴⁷ However, although these quotations demonstrate Yang’s interest in egotism, it should be noted that he did not advocate benefiting oneself at the expense of others. This is because he valued the “integrity of the self” [*cunwo* 存我] while considering “attacking others” [*qinwu* 侵物] to be the most ignoble use of force.⁴⁸ The “Yang Zhu” chapter in the *Liezi* says, “A man of ancient times, if he could have benefited the empire by the loss of one hair, would not have given it; and if everything in the empire had been offered to him alone, would not have taken it. When no one would lose a hair, and no one would take advantage of the empire, the empire was in good order.”⁴⁹ This quotation can be seen as representing the essence of Yangzian thought.⁵⁰

Therefore, Yang Zhu’s ideological proposition should be read as a Daoist health preservation method in the pre-Qin period. The *Laozi* urges readers to “maintain a pure and simple nature and reduce selfish desires and distracting thoughts.”⁵¹ As mentioned previously, it also expounds on the importance of the “three treasures.” It is easy to conclude that the Laozian means of survival simply involves minimizing personal desires, never thinking of oneself, and retiring to lead a life of seclusion, but interpretation demonstrates many misunderstandings. At the very least, it unintentionally or otherwise ignores Laozi’s dialectic thought. Although Laozi did emphasize selflessness and inaction, they should be seen as the means, rather than the ends. The *Laozi* provides an explicit explanation of the necessity of these concepts in its contention that “a sage does not accumulate.” It explains: “They

45 Jiao Xun 焦循, *Mengzi zhengyi* 孟子正義 [*The Correct Meanings of the Mencius*], coll. Shen Wenzhuo 沈文倬 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1987), 456.

46 Jiao Xun, *Mengzi zhengyi*, 915.

47 Chen Qiyou 陳奇猷, coll., *Lüshi chunqiu jiaoshi* 呂氏春秋校釋 [*Collation and Annotation of Master Lü’s Spring and Autumn Annals*] (Shanghai: Xuelin chubanshe, 1995), 1127.

48 Translation modified from A. C. Graham, *The Book of Lieh-tzu: A Classic of Tao* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 153. – Trans.

49 Translation modified from Graham, *The Book of Lieh-tzu*, 148. – Trans.

50 Hu Shi, *Zhongguo zhaxue dagang*, 129.

51 Wang Bi, *Laozi Daodejing zhu jiaoshi*, 45.

have made themselves richer by helping others; they have made themselves more abundant by giving to others,” and they “decrease, then decrease again until they reach the point of inaction; if you can do nothing, there is nothing you cannot do.”⁵² Thus Laozian “eschewing of desire” [*quyu* 去欲], “selflessness” [*wusi* 無私], “considering the body as extraneous” [*waishen* 外身], and “inaction” [*wuwei* 無為] actually result in more desire, greater self-interest, and more action, so that “nothing is done yet nothing is left undone.” Further, Yang Zhu’s advice to “action in one’s self-interest” [*weiwo* 為我] and “to value the self” [*guiji* 貴己] might appear to be manifestations of extreme self-interest but are actually equivalent to the Laozian concepts of purity and eliminating desire. In this sense, Mozi’s criticisms of Yang Zhu’s ideas might not necessarily be regarded as criticisms of pre-Qin Daoism and Laozian doctrine per se.

The “Universal Love [*Jian'ai* 兼愛]” chapter in the *Mozi* attacks people who are introduced as “certain scholars in the empire today” and “based on the words of the scholars of the empire who oppose universal love...”⁵³ According to the “Boundless Discourses” chapter in the *Huainanzi*, what is referred to here is none other than the egotistical concepts of Yang Zhu. The *Mozi* shows that the antonym of “universal” [*jian* 兼] is “distinct” [*bie* 別] as in “distinguishing officers” [*bieshi* 別士]. The *Mozi* reads: “[They] arise from hating people and harming people” and that, “If we were to distinguish and name those in the world who hate people and harm people, would it be ‘universal’ or would it be ‘discriminating’? We must undoubtedly say it would be ‘discriminating.’”⁵⁴ Thus Mozi came to the conclusion that mutual discrimination, as the source of the world’s great harms, “is to be condemned.”⁵⁵ This demonstrates that Mozi’s criticism of discrimination primarily focused on it in comparison to universality.

Liang Qichao believed that the concept of universality discussed in the *Mozi* was relative to the concept of discrimination. He argued, “According to Mozi, discrimination and universality were relative, just as Confucianism was criticized by other schools as ‘discriminating.’”⁵⁶ Here Liang used the criticism of Yang Zhu’s notion of egotism by Mencius to examine the criticism and counter-criticism of Mozi and Yangzi, rather than using the positions of Mozi and Yangzi themselves to examine the mutual opposition of the two schools. In

52 Wang Bi, *Laozi Daodejing zhu jiaoshi*, 192, 127.

53 Sun Yirang, *Mozi jiangou*, 102, 116.

54 Translation modified from Ian Johnston, *The Mozi: A Complete Translation* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2010), 147. – Trans.

55 Sun Yirang, *Mozi jiangou*, 113.

56 Liang Qichao 梁啟超, *Xianqin zhengzhi sixiangshi* 先秦政治思想史 [A History of the Political Thought of the Pre-Qin Period] (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2014), 126.

fact, Yang Zhu's opposition to Mozi's idea of universal love did not equal the Confucian concept of "differing degrees of love." Rather, it was the Mohist concept of universal love, as opposed to "self-love" [*zi'ai* 自愛]. Thus, the "Universal Love" chapter explains that "universal love brings universal benefits" and that one must "strive for the benefit of the empire and seek to eliminate all calamities throughout it." Consider as well the following passage: "A son loves himself but not his father, thus hurting his father's self-interest; a younger brother loves himself but not his elder brother, thus hurting his brother's self-interest; a minister loves himself but not his ruler's self-interest, thus hurting the ruler's self-interest."⁵⁷ In other words, self-love and self-interest involve the distinctions in love, rather than its universality, and it is this rather than the differing degrees or sequential order of love *that was criticized by the Mozi*.

Yang Zhu's concept of egotism has been interpreted in a variety of ways. Han Fei saw it as if Yang, by merely pulling out a hair, could enjoy the greatest benefit in the world. Mencius believed that Yang refused to pull out a single hair even if it would benefit the world. In fact, both of these readings are based on the premise that a person's life is most vital and that everything in life is done for the purpose of health preservation or self-cultivation. In other words, as the modern philosopher Feng Youlan 馮友蘭 [1895–1990] pointed out, "The body is the subject; everything is done for it. A person's body is the person's 'me'; to be for oneself is to be 'for me.'"⁵⁸ Yang believed society would remain orderly as long as everyone insisted on not losing a single hair for its benefit. Therefore, individuals must practice self-love and pursue self-interest. Because this is in direct opposition to Mozi's plan for peaceful governance based on the concept of universal love and benefiting others, it inevitably became the subject of Mohist criticism.

"Exalting Worthiness [*Shangxian* 尚賢]," parts I, II, and III, in the *Mozi* argues that men of proficiency and high caliber should be valued like treasures and seen as the foundations of good government. To put this into action, Mozi urges that they be "enriched, honored, revered, and commended." The chapter also criticizes those who fail in this endeavor, accusing those who overlook the capable as "seeing only the small picture and ignoring the larger one." In the words of Mozi, "The rulers of today speak of exalting the worthy in their daily life." As the Qing dynasty philologist Sun Yirang 孫詒讓 [1848–1908] pointed out, "It is not just Mozi who spoke of this."⁵⁹ Before Mozi, however, only Laozi expressed overt opposition to exalting worthiness. He argued,

57 Sun Yirang, *Mozi jiangou*, 98–99.

58 Feng Youlan, *Zhongguo zhhexueshi xinbian*, 187–88.

59 Sun Yirang, *Mozi jiangou*, 44–66.

“People follow the Earth, the Earth follows the Heavens, the Heavens follow the Cosmic Way, and the Cosmic Way follows Nature.”⁶⁰ With this in mind, the theories of humaneness, dutifulness, rites, and wisdom should be abandoned and replaced with the practices of not knowing and not desiring. Chapter 3 in the *Laozi* explains why worthiness should not be exalted and makes the case for “government through inaction.”⁶¹ Liang Qichao argued that Mozi’s opposing views on these topics “were all reactions to Laozi.”⁶² After Laozi, Zhuangzi, a Daoist, and Shang Yang and Han Fei, who were Legalist, all supported Laozi’s views on these matters. However, because they all came after Mozi, the chapter “Boundless Discourses” in the *Huainanzi* only recorded Yang Zhu as opposing Mozi’s thoughts on exalting worthiness. This demonstrates that Mozi’s criticism of the practice of not exalting worthiness at the time was clearly directed at Yang Zhu. Yang Zhu was a disciple of Laozi and, as such, inherited his master’s views on nature [*ziran* 自然], which he then developed into a theory on extreme egotism. With this in mind, how could it be possible for Yang not to oppose Mozi’s proposal to enrich, honor, revere, and commend the worthy, so as to induce them to contribute their talent and wisdom? Given that Yang Zhu was opposed to exalting worthiness, that the “Exalting Worthiness” chapter in the *Mozi* critiques his views should not be surprising.

The chapter “Perceptive Ghosts [*Minggui* 明鬼]” in the *Mozi* is divided into three parts, of which only part 3 is extant. It attempts to prove the existence of ghosts and spirits using theory and historical fact while denying and refuting their potential nonexistence.⁶³ These positions are both opposite and complementary to each other. At the time of Mozi, although Confucius and his followers “did not speak on oddities, violence, turmoil, or ghosts and spirits”⁶⁴ and held the attitude that “ghosts should be revered but kept at a distance,”⁶⁵ there is no record of their completely denying their existence. Thus Confucius also said, “If I do not make an offering as if the spirits were present, it is as if I have not made the offering at all.”⁶⁶ Further, although the “Against Confucianism” and “Gong Meng” chapters in the *Mozi* accuse Confucians of believing that poverty, wealth, longevity, and untimely death are preordained, that the heavens are unintelligent, and that ghosts do not have spiritual powers, they also point out the internal contradiction that Confucians teach

60 Wang Bi, *Laozi Daodejing zhu jiaoshi*, 64.

61 Wang Bi, *Laozi Daodejing zhu jiaoshi*, 8.

62 Liang Qichao, *Laozi, Kongzi, Mozi ji qi xuepai*, 159.

63 Sun Yirang, *Mozi jiangou*, 221.

64 Zhu Xi, *Sishu zhangju jizhu*, 98.

65 Zhu Xi, *Sishu zhangju jizhu*, 89.

66 Zhu Xi, *Sishu zhangju jizhu*, 64.

people to engage in study while believing that fate exists, and that ghosts and spirits do not have power while making offerings to them.⁶⁷ It is evident that the supposedly Confucian beliefs that spiritual beings do not exist and that life is preordained were not sufficiently grounded and thus cannot serve as areas for Mohist criticism.

A case can be made that the only pre-Mohist tendency that supported atheism was Daoism. Chapter 60 in the *Laozi* says, “Ghosts and spirits have no effect when the Cosmic Way guides the governance of the empire.”⁶⁸ Laozi, a Daoist, began to see people and their essence as manifestations of “vital energy” [*qi* 氣], which left even less room for talk of the divine. The chapter “Inward Training [*Neiyè* 內業]” in the *Guanzi* 管子 states: “The essence of all things, once combined, possesses vitality.” It also says: “When we speak of essence we speak of the quintessence of vital energy. Vital energy generates life. With life there is thinking. With thinking there is cognition. With cognition we reach the boundary.... To be able to acclimatize to things and master their changes is to attain spirituality. To be able to adapt to ever-changing situations and master their changes is to attain wisdom.”⁶⁹ In the chapter “Great Bliss [*Zhile* 至樂]” in the *Zhuangzi*, the Master comments on his wife’s death: “And yet, from the beginning, she had no life. Not only no life – she had no form. Not only no form – she had no spirit. From the original fuzzy state, that something became the energy of primal chaos. That energy then acquired a form. That form then acquired life. Now, like the cycling of the seasons, it has changed into death.”⁷⁰ This is none other than a total refutation of the existence of ghosts and spirits by Zhuangzi. Yang Zhu was the first to argue against the proposal by Mozi that spiritual beings be revered and disagreed with his theories on Heaven’s intention and perceptive ghosts. Moreover, the person described as refusing to believe in the existence of ghosts whom Mozi criticized and refuted when establishing his theory of perceptive ghosts must have been Yang Zhu or at least someone like him.

When Mohist opposition to fatalism is discussed, the following saying by Confucian is often mentioned: “Life and death are determined by one’s lot; wealth and poverty are determined by divine will.”⁷¹ However, as the modern historian of philosophy Zhang Dainian 張岱年 [1909–2004] pointed out, “The

67 Sun Yirang, *Mozi jiangou*, 458, 454.

68 Wang Bi, *Laozi Daodejing zhu jiaoshi*, 157.

69 Li Xiangfeng 黎翔鳳, *Guanzi jiaozhu* 管子校注 [*Collated Commentaries on the Guanzi*], coll. Liang Yunhua 梁運華 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2004), 931, 937.

70 Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi jishi*, 614–15.

71 Zhu Xi, *Sishu zhangju jizhu*, 134.

followers of Daoism talked about fate more than the Confucians did.”⁷² Laozi and Zhuangzi both saw the carefree acceptance of predestination as the highest form of virtue. Chapter 16 in the *Laozi* says: “Things thereabout and therein return to their origin. ‘Returning to origins’ is called calmness, and calmness is called ‘coming back to life,’ ‘coming back to life’ is called nature, and nature is called ‘being in the light.’”⁷³ Zhuangzi even pushed this kind of fatalism to an extreme. For example, the chapter “Webbed Toes [*Pianmu* 駢拇]” in the *Zhuangzi* says: “Those who follow the correct standard do not digress from the facts of the nature of a thing and its destiny,” and, later, “The kind of perfection of which I speak is not humaneness but, rather, the complete realization of the true nature of things.” Likewise, the chapter “Running of Heaven [*Tianyun* 天運]” states: “Sageliness is nothing other than knowing the truth of things and following fate,” and, later, “Nature cannot be changed. Destiny cannot be altered. Time cannot stop. Wide roads cannot be blocked.” Lastly, the chapter “Achievement of Life [*Dasheng* 達生]” says: “People who know the truth about fate will not try to pursue that which is not meant to be.”⁷⁴

In these passages, fate is conceived of as an immutable law of nature with which people have no choice but to comply. It can be argued that Yang Zhu, like Zhuangzi, assimilated the Laozian concept of “resignation to fate” [*tingming* 聽命] and the theory of predestination. As a result, he came under fire from Mozi, who regarded him as one of “those who hold that there is fate.”

4 Mohist Criticism of Other Pre-Qin Philosophies

Mozi was more or less contemporaneous with Confucius. Both were active at the end of the Spring and Autumn period [770–476 BCE] and the beginning of the Warring States period. Confucius was the founding master of the pre-Qin philosophers. Although Mozi explicitly criticized Confucianism and Daoism, he could not have critiqued schools that were not yet mature, such as the school of yin-yang, the school of diplomacy [*zongheng* 縱橫], legalism, the school of logic, the school of agriculture [*nong* 農], and syncretism [*za* 雜]. However, links can be found between Mohism and those schools of thought because Mohism emerged first, so it influenced the intellectual tendencies of

72 Zhang Dainian 張岱年, *Zhongguo zhexue dagang* 中國哲學大綱 [An Outline of Chinese Philosophy] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2017), 513.

73 Wang Bi, *Laozi Daodejing zhu jiaoshi*, 35–36. Translation modified from Zhao Yanchun, *Daodejing yingyi*, 49. – Trans.

74 Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi jishi*, 155, 199, 317, 327, 507, 532, 630.

those that followed in varying degrees. This has given rise to the argument that many schools are Mohist in origin.

For example, with respect to the school of yin-yang, the chapter “Refusing Extravagances [*Ciguo* 辭過]” in the *Mozi* mentions it. The modern historian Meng Wentong 蒙文通 [1894–1968] states, “Mohism held ghosts in high esteem, while the school of yin-yang denied human agency and put themselves at the mercy of ghosts.”⁷⁵ The chapter “Valuing Righteousness [*Guiyi* 貴義]” in the *Mozi* records a conversation between Mozi and a soothsayer: “Further, on *jia* and *yi* days, the Yellow Thearch kills the Azure Dragon in the east; on *bing* and *ding* days, the Red Dragon in the south; on *geng* and *xin* days, the White Dragon in the west; and on *ren* and *gui* days, the Black Dragon in the North.”⁷⁶ This demonstrated that not only did Mozi speak of the school of yin-yang, but it was the first time in China’s intellectual history that the five elements [*wuxing* 五行] were matched with the five Thearchs [*wudi* 五帝], five positions [*wufang* 五方], and five periods [*wushi* 五時].

Another case in point is the school of logic. The “Geng Zhu” chapter in the *Mozi* states that Zhitu Yu 治徒娛 and Xian Zishuo 縣子碩 asked Mozi, “What is the most important aspect of practicing righteousness,” to which the Master replied,

It is like building a wall. Those who are able to compact the earth should compact it; those who are able to carry the earth should carry it; those who are able to do the survey should do it. Then the wall will be completed. Practicing righteousness is like this. When those who are able to dispute, dispute; when those who are able to explain the writings, explain them; when those who are able to conduct affairs, conduct them – then righteousness will be complete.⁷⁷

This demonstrates that, at the time of Mozi, although the School of Logic may not have become an official pre-Qin philosophy, its dialectical tendencies had already formed, and Mozi acknowledged the value and significance of debate, believing it to be crucial in practicing righteousness. Thus, although Mozi’s own utterances were “so filled with words that his message at times was obscured,”⁷⁸ undoubtedly he still appreciated the practice of proper rhetoric.

75 Meng Wentong 蒙文通, *Guxue zhenwei* 古學甄微 [*Subtle Inquiries in Classical Studies*] (Chengdu: Bashu shushe, 1987), 312.

76 Sun Yirang, *Mozi jianqu*, 448.

77 Sun Yirang, *Mozi jianqu*, 426–27. Translation modified from Johnston, *The Mozi*, 643. – Trans.

78 Liang Qixiong, *Hanzi qianjie*, 272.

Chapters in the *Mozi* such as “Geng Zhu,” “Valuing Righteousness,” “Gong Meng,” “Lu’s Questions [*Luwen* 魯問],” and “Gongshu 公輸” record Mozi’s debates with others and his “analysis of principles” [*xili* 析理] by “distinguishing names” [*bianming* 辨名]. Therefore, the debates recorded in the *Mozi* mostly show rigorous logic. Past scholars have already explained this in detail, but here an example is given to clarify it. The “Gongshu” chapter in the *Mozi* records the Master’s meeting with King Hui of Chu 楚惠王 [r. 488–432 BCE]. Mozi used rigorous reasoning to demonstrate the injustice of Chu’s [1115–223 BCE] attack on the Song [1114–286 BCE]. Not only is it strongly persuasive logically, but it also demonstrates that he is worthy of being considered the great founder and practitioner of logic in China. Later, Mohist logicians had outstanding intellectual achievements, giving rise to the assumption that the scholars at the school of logic had Mohist origins. This result is due to all kinds of complex historical factors.

Later followers of Mohism were generally called neo-Mohists [*biemo* 別墨], as they were passionate debaters about the “separation between hard and white” [*lijianbai* 離堅白] and the “unity of sameness and difference” [*hetongyi* 合同異], among other concerns.⁷⁹ The theoretical achievements of neo-Mohists in terms of their study of logic are mostly recorded in the chapters “Choosing the Greater [*Da qu* 大取],” “Choosing the Lesser [*Xiao qu* 小取],” “Canons [*Jing* 經],” and “Explanations [*Jingshuo* 經說].” The scholar Lu Sheng 魯勝 in the Western Jin 西晉 [266–316] referred to them as “Mohist dialectics” [*mobian* 墨辯]. Some scholars have argued that these dialectic chapters were developed before Hui Shi 惠施 [370–310 BCE] and others and that Hui Shi refuted their views.⁸⁰ If this view were reversed, the “hard and white and sameness and difference” discourse in the Mohist dialects could be regarded as disagreement and controversy caused by Song Xing 宋鉞 [370–291 BCE] and Hui Shi and that the “containing hard and white” and “unity of sameness and difference” factions among the neo-Mohists were criticisms of the “separating hard and white” and “distinguishing sameness and difference” groups such as those of Hui Shi and Gongsun Long 公孫龍 [ca. 320–250 BCE]. This might be closer to the actual development of Mohism in the mid-Warring States period.⁸¹ According to the research of scholars such as Guo Moruo 郭沫若 [1892–1978], the chapters “Canons” and “Explanations”

79 Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi jishi*, 1079.

80 Yang Kuan 楊寬, *Zhanguo shi* 戰國史 [A History of the Warring States Period] (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 2003), 573.

81 Gao Huaping 高華平, *Xianqin zhuzi yu chuguo zhuzi xue* 先秦諸子與楚國諸子學 [Research on the Philosophers of the Pre-Qin Period and the Domain of Chu] (Beijing: Beijing shifan daxue chubanshe, 2016), 223–27.

can be read as expounding on two mutually opposing factions. Guo notes that “Canons I” advocates “containing hard and white,” whereas “Canons II” supports “separating hard and white.” He then argues that the view on sameness and difference as discussed in “Canons I” is based on common sense, whereas that of “Canons II” carries forward the views of Hui Shi.⁸² Thus, the criticism of neo-Mohism present in the Mohist canons can be regarded as the criticism of one group of Mohists and of Hui Shi and others by later Mohists.

Legalism is another case in point. It formed before the Qin but after Mohism, so it would not have been possible for early Mohists to criticize its ideas. However, the term *fa* is mentioned many times in the *Mozi*. As a verb that means “to follow the example of,” *fa* is used in the chapter “On Standards and Rules [*Fayi* 法儀]” as “to take one’s father and mother as one’s model” and “to pattern the Heavens.” As a noun meaning “rule,” “law,” or “standard,” it is seen in the chapter “Heaven’s Intention II [*Tianzhi zhong* 天志中]”: “Therefore, Mozi believed that there was such a thing as Heaven’s intention.... Therefore, roundness and nonroundness are both available and knowable. What is the reason for this? It is because the rules for determining the circle are very clear.” The chapter also states, “Therefore, Mozi conceived of Heaven’s intention and regarded it as the basic standard.”⁸³ This shows that the word *fa* in the *Mozi* often referred to rules, laws, or standards, a usage that differs from that of legalism, which usually used *fa* to refer to penalties and decrees. Yet Mohists’ emphasis on *fa* and all the ideological principles and methods that flow from it are nonetheless consistent with legalism. That the Legalists took their name from the term *fa* can be said to be the result of their having been inspired by Mohist thought. It can also be said that Mohists were influenced by the concept of “exalting the law” [*shangfa* 尚法], espoused by early Legalists.

Further, the chapter “On Standards and Rules” states, “Mozi said: People who handle affairs in the world cannot be without rules. A matter has never been settled without rules. Even if a scholar becomes a high-ranking officer or chancellor, he must have laws. Even craftsmen working in various industries have laws.” The chapter “Exalting Unity II [*Shangtong zhong* 尚同中]” says: “Everyone in the world has different opinions. So one person has one opinion, ten people have ten opinions, and a hundred people have a hundred opinions. The higher the number, the more opinions. Because everyone thinks that their opinions are right, and that others’ opinions are wrong, they attack

82 Guo Moruo 郭沫若, *Shi pipan shu* 十批判書 [*Ten Books of Criticism*] (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1954), 247–48.

83 Sun Yirang, *Mozi jiangou*, 21, 22, 205, 211.

each other.”⁸⁴ This argument may have directly inspired Legalists to unify their ideology and inhibit the development of other schools of thought.

Mohism’s overt criticism of Legalist scholarship would have been expressed by the Song Xing and Yin Wen 尹文 [360–280 BCE] factions of the Jixia Academy [*Jixia xuepai* 稷下學派]. After all, concepts such as “being insulted without being disgraced,” “banning violence and suppressing warfare,” and “keeping people from fighting” are typical of their thinking. So why did Song and Yin espouse ideological propositions of this nature? Obviously, they were articulated at a time when verbal debates were commonplace. Moreover, the most fervent advocates of warfare and fighting for personal honor were the pre-Qin Legalists. Therefore, the fiercest critics of Song and Yin’s propositions were Xun Qing 荀卿 [ca. 310–235 BCE], who emphasized rituals and laws, and Han Fei, who epitomized the Legalist thought. The target of Song and Yin’s criticisms was the utilitarian thought of Legalists, who were seen as fighting for their own fame and fortune.

The formation of minor pre-Qin intellectual trends such as the schools of diplomacy, agriculture, and syncretism occurred after the advent of Mohism. As a result, Mozi and early Mohists would not have had the opportunity to criticize them, and there is little relationship between them. Moreover, the Mohist concepts of universal love, condemnation of offensive warfare, and exalting unity were contradictory to the call by the school of diplomacy for “offense, defense, and annexation,” “lobbying and debating,” “switching sides,” and “methods of deception and treating people unfairly.” Thus, it can be said that the Mohist criticism of legalism was also, in a sense, a kind of criticism of the school of diplomacy. In the “Valuing Righteousness” chapter in the *Mozi*, the Master says, “I did not assume the post assigned to me by our ruler, nor did I have the trouble caused by farming.”⁸⁵ This shows that he did not directly participate in agricultural labor. It is notable that Mozi fashioned birds out of bamboo and wood, and most of his disciples were also handicraftsmen. Naturally, he did not pay much attention to farmers and agricultural production. However, he resolutely maintained the social hierarchy at that time, so it is conceivable that Mozi and Mohism adopted a negative attitude toward the Agriculturalists, who proposed that the ruler cultivate the land with the peasants and take meals with them.

The chapter “Duke Wen of Teng I” in the *Mencius* says that Xu Xing 許行 (372–289 BCE) “had dozens of disciples, all dressed in hemp clothes, making

84 Sun Yirang, *Mozi jiangou*, 20, 77.

85 Sun Yirang, *Mozi jiangou*, 445.

a living by making straw sandals and weaving mats.”⁸⁶ Some scholars believe that Xu Xing was a Mohist, but this is not accurate. As mentioned earlier, Mozi opposed the concepts of “one person, one opinion” and “one hundred people, one hundred opinions,” so he would not have agreed with the viewpoints of the Syncretists. Rather, he would have advocated the unification of thought as proposed by the Legalists. The chapter “Perceptive Ghosts” in the *Mozi* speaks of King Xuan of Zhou 周宣王 [r. 828–783 BCE] being killed by an arrow fired by the ghost of Du Bo 杜伯 and myriad other classical allusions to prove the existence of ghosts. In the chapter “Evaluating Ghosts [*Dinggui* 訂鬼]” in *Discourses Weighed in the Balance* [*Lunheng* 論衡], the Han dynasty [206 BCE–220] philosopher Wang Chong 王充 [27–97] outlined his argument against the existence of ghosts. Modern scholars claim that these accounts in the *Mozi* were by the school of minor talks [*Xiaoshuo jia* 小說家]. However, the *Mozi* overtly states that they were recorded in classics such as the *Book of Songs*, the *Book of Documents*, and the *Spring and Autumn Annals*. Presumably, these classics were cited with the goal of demonstrating the credibility of his remarks. It has been suggested that Mozi believed that the school of minor talks “developed from talks on the street and legends on the road”⁸⁷ and thus could never achieve “grand elegance” [*daya* 大雅]. Thus, even if some sources in the school of minor talks could prove his arguments, Mozi would not use them. This can be read not only as Mozi’s attitude toward the school but also as a Mohist criticism of it.

Translated by Carl Gene Fordham

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86 Ren Jiyu 任繼愈, *Mozi yu mojia* 墨子與墨家 [*Mozi and Mohism*] (Beijing: Beijing chubanshe, 2016), 4.

87 Chen Guoqing, *Hanshu yiwenzhi zhushi huibian*, 163.

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Considering the Present from the Past: On Mohist Thought and Its Modern Transformation

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Abstract

Pre-Qin era Mohist thought was endowed with a Confucian legacy as well as a critical eye and a unique set of ideas. These ideas later affected Legalist thought and attracted criticism from Mencius, Xunzi, and Zhuangzi, and many disputes arose thereafter between the later Mohists. Mohist thought can be broadly characterized as possessing distinctively ethical, rational, and practical features, and we can identify three main aspects of the modern transformation of Mohist philosophy. The first derives from Mozi's statement on "[the endeavor to] procure benefits for the world and eliminate its calamities," which can be interpreted as calling on humanity to resolve regional issues from a global viewpoint. The second draws upon Mozi's statement on "universal love and mutual aid" to promote a manner of thinking that embraces peace at a global level and cultivates strong worldwide environmental awareness. The third draws upon Mozi's ideas of "identification with the superior" and "Mohist methods of thinking" to promote a type of technological integration that incorporates cultural and social approaches and scientific thought to establish a global teaching system.

Keywords

all under Heaven – identification with the superior – innovation – Mohism – universal love

1 Characteristics of Mohist Thought

1.1 *The Spirit of “Universal Love”*

What is “universal love” [*jian'ai* 兼愛]? The chapter “Canon I [*Jing shang* 經上]” in the *Mozi* 墨子 says: “A *ti* is a portion in a *jian*.”¹ The chapter “Explanations I [*Jingshuo shang* 經說上]” describes a *ti* 體 as: “For example, one of two, or the starting point of a measured length.”² Here, *jian* 兼 denotes a whole, and *ti* is a part thereof. As also stated in “Canon I”: “*Sun* 損 [reduction/loss] is the removal of some without the rest.”³ *Mozi* continues in the “Explanations I”: “Some but not the rest: A *ti* is a part of a whole [*jian*].”⁴ These musings give us some insight into Mozi’s conception of “universal love”. It is a type of love bestowed on all of humanity, devoid of local particularity. As described in the chapter “Major Illustrations [*Daqu* 大取]” in the *Mozi*: “The love of many generations and the love of few generations are the same. In universal love it is also the same. The love of former generations and the love of future generations are the same as the love of the present generation.”⁵ Looking at the relative emphasis here that “universal love” should not be confined by the era in which we live, we could describe the “scope” of universal love as encompassing all people, regardless of the vastness or smallness of the groups involved. Mozi’s references to past generations, future generations, and those currently alive could be paraphrased as that the people who are the proper objects of universal love are not excluded from it by the time in which they exist – they should not be barred from universal love because of the limitation of having lived in the past or future. We observe here that Mozi’s “universal love” is a type of love that transcends space and time and is targeted at all of humanity.

We clearly observe a distinction between the sense of equality on display here in Mozi’s concept of “universal love” and concepts of love proposed by Confucian scholars who admit a difference in the degree of love to be properly shown toward others based on, for example, one’s blood relationship to an individual. The “Major Illustrations” states: “Love everyone the same way you

1 Translation of this section taken from “經上-Canon I,” trans. A. C. Graham, available at <https://ctext.org/mozi/canon-i/>.

2 Translation taken from “經上-Canon I,” <https://ctext.org/mozi/canon-i/>.

3 Translation taken from “經上-Canon I,” <https://ctext.org/mozi/canon-i/>.

4 Sun Yirang 孫詒讓, *Mozi jiangou* 墨子閒詁 [*Inquiries and Interpretations of the Mozi*] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1954), 213.

5 Ian Johnston, *The Mozi: A Complete Translation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 459.

would love your own family.”⁶ The chapter “Universal Love I [*Jian'ai shang* 兼愛上]” in the *Mozi* also speaks about universal love as “When everyone regards other persons as his own person ... when everyone regards other families as his own family ... when everyone regards the houses of others as one’s own ... when everyone regards the states of others as one’s own.”⁷ From this we observe that Mozi’s conception of universal love is a form of love that places everyone on the same footing, taking no particular account of one’s relationship to an individual, family connections or lack thereof, proximity, class, social ranking, or wealth. One aspect to this “equal love” is the sense of equality derived from “regarding others as you do oneself.” Another aspect is a particular view that every individual is a person [*ren* 人] on an entirely equal footing from the vantage point of Heaven [*tian* 天].

We have also an opportunity to view the meaning of *jian'ai* from its various English translations:

1. Mei Yibao 梅貽寶 [1900–1997] and Chen Rongjie 陳榮捷 [1901–1994]: “Universal love.” This phrasing emphasizes the universality and holistic nature of love.⁸
2. *Stanford Encyclopedia*: “Inclusive care.” This phrasing emphasizes the non-exclusive and nondiscriminatory nature of *jian'ai*.
3. Heiner Roetz: “Co-love.” This phrasing refers to the “mutually beneficial” and “cooperative” nature of love within *jian'ai*.
4. Angus C. Graham: “Concern for everyone.” This phrasing highlights the fact that *jian'ai* is concerned about every single individual.⁹

These four approaches to translation of the term *jian'ai* help to illustrate its meaning from several perspectives. It is, in other words, a universal, non-exclusionary, mutual and practical concern for every individual.

Furthermore, Mozi’s conception of the “mutuality of universal love” [*jian xiang'ai* 兼相愛] is often discussed alongside his conception of “mutual aid” [*jiao xiangli* 交相利]. *Li* 利, the character for “aid” (or benefit) is related to *yi* 義 [justice, morality, righteousness]; *li* refers to a public benefit and is a *liyi* 利益 [benefit] with real-world, practical effects.

The spirit of universal love espoused by Mozi is concerned about both the attainment of practical and public benefits for all; Mozi here affirms the interactive nature of human relationships, for example, with the analogy “When

6 Translation taken from “大取-Major Illustrations,” <https://ctext.org/mozi/major-illustrations/>.

7 Translation taken from “兼愛上-Universal Love I,” <https://ctext.org/mozi/universal-love-i>.

8 Wing-Tsit Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 212–13.

9 Sun Zhongyuan 孫中原, ed., *Moxue yu xiandai wenhua* 墨學與現代文化 [*Mohism and Modern Culture*] (Beijing: Zhongguo guangbo dianshi chubanshe, 2007), 216–18.

a peach is thrown to us, we would return with a prune.¹⁰ As Professor Yan Lingfeng 嚴靈峰 [1903–1999] states: “In order to achieve universal love, both parties must also practice mutual love. Only this will prove sufficient to realize the ideal of ‘universal love and mutual aid.’”¹¹ Professor Yan here similarly highlights the principal of interactivity in Mozi’s universal love. A more in-depth examination of the principle demonstrates that one of the parties involved must recognize the meaning of universal love and approve of the value of such an endeavor before this kind of interactivity can take place. That is, there must be proactive willingness to “love first” [*xian'ai* 先愛]; there is a proactive nature to universal love required to make the attainment of this mutually beneficial outcome possible. Mozi took the view that if all people were willing to practice care and concern for others, then this would naturally result in benefits for “all people under heaven” [*tianxia ren* 天下人].

1.2 *Characteristics of Mozi’s Thought on “Names and Disputes”*

Mozi’s thoughts on “names and disputes” [*mingbian* 名辯] are an important component of Mohist philosophy. Names and reasoning determine how we perceive *shi* 實 [the stuff, things, objects, reality of the actual world] and form their own branch of learning. Mozi states: “Names are used to explain stuff; phrases are used to express intention; explanations are used to bring out causes. Choose according to kind; offer according to kind.”¹² This is an effective, influential tool with which to persuade monarchs and to promote universal love and non-aggressive [*feigong* 非攻] thought.

The chapter “Lu’s Questions [*Luwen* 魯問]” in the *Mozi* records:

I concluded that none of these is as good as to familiarize myself with the Tao of the ancient sage-kings, and discover their principles, and to understand the words of the sages and be clear about their expressions; and with these to persuade the rulers and then the common people. When the rulers adopt my principles their states will be orderly. When the common people adopt my principles their conduct will be regulated.¹³

10 Translation taken from “抑-Yi,” <https://ctext.org/book-of-poetry/yi/>.

11 Yan Lingfeng 嚴靈峰, *Mozi jianbian* 墨子簡編 [*Mozi Compendium*] (Taipei: Shangwu yinshu guan, 1995), 36.

12 Translation taken from “小取-Minor Illustrations,” <https://ctext.org/mozi/minor-illustrations/>.

13 Translation taken from “魯問 – Lu’s Question,” <https://ctext.org/mozi/lus-question/>.

There is a very practical aspect to Mozi's exploration of the words of the sage-kings. Mozi was using the ideas of the ancient sages and sage-kings to try to have a persuasive effect on the members of all classes during this Warring States period [475–221 BCE] to the effect that we should all “understand the words of the sages” – that is, to examine the meaning and significance of their words. Mozi provides further explanation for names and disputations thought in his chapter “Minor Illustrations [*Xiaoqu* 小取].”

The chapter states:

Distinguishing will be used to make clear the distinction between so and not so; investigate the rules of order and chaos; make clear the locations of similarity and difference; examine the patterns of name and stuff; locate benefit and harm, and resolve doubts. Only then can one describe in approximation the way the myriad things are, and speak of seeking similarity of sayings. Names are used to raise stuff; phrases are used to express intention; explanations are used to bring out causes. Choose according to kind; offer according to kind.¹⁴

Mozi's reference to the term *shuo* 說 [to say, express or explain] in his statement “explanations [*shuo*] are used to bring out causes” implies a significant amount of persuasive debate and analysis. In terms of the particular characteristics of Mozi's names and disputes, the debating methods of analogy [*pi* 辟], similarity [*mou* 侔], leading [*yuan* 援], and extending [*tui* 推] raised in the “Minor Illustrations” are all essentially analogical methods aimed at facilitating negotiation and persuasion after one masters the criteria one's counterpart can acknowledge according to the principal of “knowing one's opponent” [*zhibi* 知彼]. This approach could be applied to politics, diplomacy, economics, education, the environment, and so forth.

1.3 *Practical Guidance*

How should the Mohist method of three standards [*sanbiao fa* 三表法] be applied? According to Mozi: “It is to be applied by adopting it in government and observing its benefits to the country and the people.”¹⁵ The three Mohist standards give us a particular metric that reveals the Mohist emphasis on

14 Translation taken from “小取-Minor Illustrations,” <https://ctext.org/mozi/minor-illustrations/>.

15 Translation taken from “非命上-Anti-Fatalism I,” <https://ctext.org/mozi/anti-fatalism-i/>.

yong 用 [use or application]. Mohism's practical guidance is chiefly expressed in two areas.

First, Mozi argued that people are composed of a physical body and a mind. We observe Mozi's use of the character *xing* 形 [body] in multiple places in his *Mozi* canons as indicating the purposeful bent of his theories – to the improvement of the people's material living conditions. For example, we see Mozi identify three worries [*huan* 患] that people suffer in the chapter “Against Music I [*Feiyue shang* 非樂上]”: “The hungry cannot be fed, that the cold cannot be clothed, and that the tired cannot get rest.”¹⁶ And we also observe that Mozi's ideas in “Against Music” as well as in many of his other works were concerned with the aim of eradicating such evils from the society. The chapter “Lu's Questions” states:

Gongshu zi constructed a bird from bamboo and wood and when it was completed he flew it. It stayed up [in the air] for three days. Gongshu zi was proud of his supreme skill. Mozi said to him: Your accomplishment in constructing a bird does not compare with that of the carpenter in making a linchpin. In a short while he could cut out the piece of wood of three inches. Yet it would carry a load of fifty *shi*. For any achievement that is beneficial to man is said to be beautiful, and anything not beneficial is said to be clumsy.¹⁷

On occasion, Mozi had to craft numerous farming implements, devices, military defensive chariots, weapons, and some technical tools. This shows that all such creations, whether related to physical capabilities [*tineng* 體能], property and assets [*zicai* 資財], or tools [*qiwu* 器物], were, in Mozi's eyes, beneficial to the people. The use of *tineng* was found in refining a healthy physique, thereby infusing an individual with abundant strength to undertake such endeavors as would benefit wider society; the use of assets and devices is to be found in satisfying the everyday needs of the people for the purpose of attaining greater safety, convenience, comfort, and so on. Thus, the modern significance of *xing* in modern Mohist thought emphasizes the possession of good health, ample necessities, and a convenient living environment and circumstances.

Second, turning to Mozi's concept of *zhi* 智 [mind], Mohist thought facilitated the development of a perspective on happiness somewhat geared to the

16 Translation taken from “非樂上-Condemnation of Music I,” <https://ctext.org/mozi/condemnation-of-music-i/>.

17 Translation taken from “魯問-Lu's Question,” <https://ctext.org/mozi/lus-question/>.

limitation of personal desire. Mozi's ideas on "frugality" [*jieyong* 節用] and "frugality in funerals" [*jiezang* 節葬] in particular can be viewed from the role of *zhi* in restraining people's desires. "Happiness" [*xingfu* 幸福] here correlates positively with "what is obtained" [*suode* 所得] but negatively with "desire" [*yuwang* 欲望]. Thus, assuming a situation in which "what is obtained" remains unchanged, if one's desire decreases, then the happiness that one can obtain concomitantly increases. In reality, however, what people "obtain" differs quite significantly. Mozi's thinking in "Against Fatalism [*Feiming* 非命]" and "Valuing Rightness [*Guiyi* 貴義]" show that he encouraged people to strive enthusiastically and to work hard to increase what they could obtain. These efforts increase, on the one hand, the bounty that individuals obtain for themselves and, on the other, limit individuals' inflated sense of desire that would normally accompany such an increase (assuming a Mohist approach), thus tending to increase people's happiness. The "Canon I" also notes that: "*Li* is what one is pleased to get."¹⁸ Naturally, the term *de* 得 [to get or obtain] here does not merely refer to things of a financial or material nature. The chapters "Universal Love" and "Will of Heaven [*Tianzhi* 天志]" in the *Mozi* show that this *de* can also include, for example, respect from others and the commendation of Heaven – that is, things that require people to maintain excellent, caring relationships with those around them – as well as habits in the world that comport with moral and ethical principles – that is, the rightness desired by Heaven.

We hereby obtain a glimpse of a holistic view of the ethical, rational, and practical elements that characterize Mohist thought. The ethical aspect of Mozi's thought is evident from his concept of "universal love," the rational aspect of Mozi's thought from his "names and disputes," and the practical aspect from Mozi's holistic physical and mental perspective on human beings.

2 Pre-Qin Era Critiques of and Responses to Mohist Thought

The Mohist School appears to have been very prominent along with the Confucians during the Warring States period, as reflected in this statement in the "Eminence in Learning [*Xianxue* 顯學]" chapter in the *Han Fei zi* 韓非子: "In the present age, the celebrities for learning are the Literati and the Mohists. The highest figure of the Literati was Kung Chiu; the highest figure of the

18 Translation taken from "經上-Canon I," <https://ctext.org/mozi/canon-i/>.

Mohists was Mo Ti.¹⁹ The status of Mozi and Mohist thought as a prominent philosophy [*xianxue* 顯學] at the time inevitably meant that Mohist thought would both have influence on and be criticized by contemporary and later scholars.

2.1 *Mencius's Critique of Mohism*

Mencius [372–289 BCE] launched a vigorous critique of Mozi, stating:

Again the world fell into decay, and principles faded away. Perverse speakings and oppressive deeds waxed rife again.... Once more, sage sovereigns cease to arise, and the princes of the States give the reins to their lusts. Unemployed scholars indulge in unreasonable discussions. The words of Yang Zhu and Mo Di fill the country. If you listen to people's discourses throughout it, you will find that they have adopted the views either of Yang or of Mo. Now, Yang's principle is "each one for himself," which does not acknowledge the claims of the sovereign. Mo's principle is "to love all equally," which does not acknowledge the peculiar affection due to a father. But to acknowledge neither king nor father is to be in the state of a beast.²⁰

Mencius was of the view that Mozi's conception of universal love was in contradiction to human nature. If we viewed and treated others with the same compassionate eyes and actions as we treat and view our own parents, for example, then this would be tantamount to a rejection and abandonment of the familial affections that are properly part of "the natural relationship appropriate to father and son" [*fuzi renlun* 父子人倫] and in violation of filial piety. One of Mozi's followers, Yi Zhi 夷之, mounted a defense on Mozi's behalf.

As the "Teng Wen Gong I 滕文公上" chapter in the *Mencius* 孟子 records:

Yi said, "Even according to the principles of the learned, we find that the ancients acted towards the people 'as if they were watching over an infant.' What does this expression mean? To me it sounds that we are to love all without difference of degree; but the manifestation of love must begin with our parents." Xu reported this reply to Mencius, who said, "Now, does Yi really think that a man's affection for the child of his

19 Translation taken from W. K. Liao, *The Complete Works of Han Fei Tzū with Collected Commentaries* (London: Probsthain, 1939), 336.

20 Translation taken from "滕文公下-Teng Wen Gong II," <https://ctext.org/mengzi/teng-wen-gong-ii/>.

brother is merely like his affection for the infant of a neighbor? What is to be approved in that expression is simply this: that if an infant crawling about is likely to fall into a well, it is no crime in the infant. Moreover, Heaven gives birth to creatures in such a way that they have one root, and Yi makes them to have two roots. This is the cause of his error.”²¹

As Yi Zhi’s “discussion of motivation and effects” [*zhigong weibian* 志功為辯] perspective illustrates, there is a point of comparison between the Mohists and Confucians in that this love borders on the Confucian view of a sage-king who looks upon his people as his own children and that universal love, practically speaking, must begin with our surrounding family and relatives. Mencius opposed this approach because, as per his account, the children of one’s own brother are fundamentally different from the children of one’s neighbor due to their respective parentage, and the familial affection [*qin qing* 親情] of blood relationships has its own independent natural basis.

2.2 *Xunzi’s Critique of Mohism*

The “Against the Twelve Masters [*Fei shi’er zi* 非十二子]” chapter in the *Xunzi* 荀子 states:

Some of these men do not understand the proper scales for unifying the world and establishing states and families. They elevate concrete results and usefulness, and they extol frugality and restraint. But they have disdain for ranks and classes, and so they have never been able to accept distinctions and differences, or to discriminate between lord and minister. Nevertheless, they can cite evidence for maintaining their views, and they achieve a reasoned order in their explanations, so that it is enough to deceive and confuse the foolish masses. Just such men are Mo Di and Song Xing.²²

Xunzi 荀子 [313–238 BCE] believed that Mohist thinking contained too great an emphasis on self-restraint, to the point of overlooking differences between different groups in society, such as between the higher and lower classes, ignoring the natural distinctions in and between human relationships, to the point that even the relationships between the ruler and his ministers were not sufficiently distinguished. From Xunzi’s perspective, where *li* 禮 [propriety]

²¹ “滕文公上-Teng Wen Gong I,” <https://ctext.org/mengzi/teng-wen-gong-i/>.

²² Translation taken from Eric L. Hutton, *Xunzi, the Complete Text* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 40.

should establish an orderly society, Mozi's theories would have the effect of deceiving and confusing the people, although it was not without reasonable merit in certain respects.

The chapter "On Enriching the State [*Fuguo* 富國]" in the *Xunzi* records:

In his teachings, Mozi worries very conspicuously about insufficiency for the whole world. However, insufficiency is not the common disaster facing the world. That is only Mozi's individual worry and erroneous reckoning. Now the way this soil gives birth to the five grains is such that if people tend it well, a single *mu* of land will yield several bushels, and within a single year one can have two harvests.... Beyond these, the flying birds, ducks, and swans can become [so numerous as to be] like billows of smoke in the sky. Beyond these, the insects and other myriad creatures live in the remaining space. Among all these, there are countless that are edible. So, the way Heaven and Earth give birth to the myriad things is such that there is originally an abundance sufficient to feed people. The fibrous plants and silk and the feathers, fur, teeth, and shells of the animals are originally in abundance sufficient to clothe people. So the question of abundance or insufficiency is not the common disaster facing the world. That is only Mozi's individual worry and erroneous reckoning.²³

Here, *Xunzi* raises several criticisms as to the emphasis on frugality and saving in Mohist thought, believing Mozi to be excessively concerned with the travails of insufficient food and clothing. *Xunzi* is focusing here on the fact that the main determining factor involved in whether the individuals concerned are skilled at the work of production and using the factors of favorable geographic conditions and timing [*tianshi dili* 天時地利] to increase production or yield. He also makes the point that, in reality, the bounty of nature is sufficient for human society's uses. The "Discourse on Heaven [*Tianlun* 天論]" in the *Xunzi* records: "Mozi saw the value of making things uniform, but did not see the value of establishing differences."²⁴ *Xunzi* also states in the "Dissolving Partiality [*Jiebi* 解蔽]" chapter of the *Xunzi* that: "Mozi is blinded by utility and insensitive to good form."²⁵ Here, *Xunzi* is laying criticism on what, in his eyes, is Mozi's blindness to disparities between human relationships due to a singular

23 Translation taken from Hutton, *Xunzi*, 184–85.

24 Translation taken from Hutton, *Xunzi*, 274.

25 Translation taken from Carine Defoort, "Do the Ten Mohist Theses Represent Mozi's Thought? Reading the Masters with a Focus on Mottos," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 77, no. 2 (2014): 356.

focus on putting everyone on an equal level. Furthermore, Mozi is focused only on the practical aspects of manners to the neglect of cultural and literary cultivation [*renwen xiuyang* 人文修養]. The chapter “Discourse on Music [*Yuelun* 樂論]” in the *Xunzi* states:

To control desire with morality enables one to be happy and not dissolute; to forget morality to satisfy our desires is to become lost and not joyous. And so music is used as a guide toward the people’s entertainment. Bells and drums, flutes and chime-stone, lutes and zithers are used as a guide towards ethical cultivation. The promotion of music has promoted morality amongst the people. So music is a major tool in the governance of the people, and yet Master Mo opposes it.²⁶

Xunzi advocated that music be an instrument because of its role in the ethical cultivation of the human heart [*jiaohua renxin* 教化人心] and guiding the people toward benevolent endeavors. For Xunzi, music was a pathway for mollifying the people’s desires to help establish a more orderly society, yet Mozi seemed to disagree.

The chapter “On Enriching the State” states:

The common disasters of the world are inflicted by disorder. Why not attempt to locate the authors of such disorder? I am of the view that Master Mo’s opposition to music will promote general disorder. He advocates frugality, which would leave the world poorer.... If Master Mo were in charge of the earth or its kingdoms, then the number of servants would be reduced, officialdom diminished, and difficult work and frugality promoted such that these [people of high rank] would do the same work as the ordinary person. This would deprive the monarch of his stature; without the monarch’s stature, then lawbreakers would not receive their punishment. If there is no effective commendation, then the sage-like person will not be employed and promoted; if there is no effective punishment, then those who are lack such [sage-like] qualities cannot be removed. If the sage-like person cannot be [gainfully] used, and the unsage-like cannot be removed, then there is a lack of appropriate utilization for those who have ability and those without.²⁷

26 Wang Xianqian 王先謙, *Xunzi jijie* 荀子集解 [Collected Explanations of the Xunzi], coll. Shen Xiaohuan 沈嘯寰 and Wang Xingxian 王星賢 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1988), 382.

27 Wang Xianqian, *Xunzi jijie*, 185–86.

Here, Xunzi illustrates his view that Mozi's emphasis on frugality and opposition to music will make it difficult for people to satisfy their desires. For instance, if we were to reduce the salaries given to officers of the state sizably in order to encourage greater frugality and for senior members of society to engage in hard physical work alongside the common folk, this will also strip officials of much of their dignity and authority, the very authority that enables these officials to dispense commendations or punishments to commendable or deplorable members of society. Without such systems of commendation or punishment, we must then become concerned about how the country can be governed effectively.

2.3 *Zhuangzi's Critique of Mohism*

The "The Adjustment of Controversies [*Qiwu lun* 齊物論]" chapter in the *Zhuangzi* 莊子 states:

Dao becomes obscured through the small comprehension [of the mind], and speech comes to be obscured through the vaingloriousness [of the speaker]. So it is that we have the contentions between the Literati and the Mohists, the one side affirming what the other denies, and vice versa. If we would decide on their several affirmations and denials, no plan is like bringing the [proper] light [of the mind] to bear on them.²⁸

Here, we can see Zhuangzi's 莊子 [ca. 369–286 BCE] view that the Confucians and Mohists are fortifying their own positions without much regard to "reaching out," from which vantage point their critiques are thus mounted. The problems in the other side's conceptions that each seeks to lay clear is merely working out their own prior biases. In reality, a scholar can see through such preconceptions only with the light of a calm and collected heart and understanding of the Dao that takes a more general picture into account.

The "Tian Xia 天下" chapter in the *Zhuangzi* records:

Mo-zi, in praise of his views, said, "Anciently, when Yu was draining off the waters of the flood, he set free the channels of the Jiang and the He, and opened communications with them from the regions of the four Yi and the nine provinces. The famous hills with which he dealt were 300, the branch streams were 3000, and the smaller ones innumerable. With his own hands he carried the sack and wielded the spade, till he

²⁸ Translation taken from "齊物論-The Adjustment of Controversies," <https://ctext.org/zhuangzi/adjustment-of-controversies/>.

had united all the streams of the country [conducting them to the sea]. There was no hair left on his legs from the knee to the ankle. He bathed his hair in the violent wind, and combed it in the pelting rain, thus marking out the myriad states. Yu was a great sage, and thus he toiled in the service of the world.” The effect of this is that in this later time most of the Mohists wear skins and dolychos cloth, with shoes of wood or twisted hemp, not stopping day or night, but considering such toiling on their part as their highest achievement. They say that he who cannot do this is acting contrary to the way of Yu, and not fit to be a Mohist.... They would have made the Mohists of future ages feel it necessary to toil themselves, till there was not a hair on their legs, and still be urging one another on; [thus producing a condition] superior indeed to disorder, but inferior to the result of good government. Nevertheless, Mo-zi was indeed one of the best men in the world, which you may search without finding his equal. Decayed and worn [his person] might be, but he is not to be rejected – a scholar of ability indeed!²⁹

Here, we see that in Zhuangzi’s estimation the Mohist ideal is unattainable, albeit perhaps worthy of aspiration; and although the Mohists might cultivate a self-sacrificial spirit, this is to no great end.

From the preceding we can make out roughly four main areas of criticism of Mohist philosophy. First, universal love violates human nature and presents an impediment to filial piety. Second, Mozi downplays or overlooks the importance of propriety and music in the establishment of an orderly society. Third, Mohist thought has undergirded itself with too narrow and confined a perspective. And, fourth, the Mohist ideal is set far too high and is unattainable in reality. Let us now turn to a deeper examination of the reasoning in these critiques from the Mohist perspective.

2.4 Responses to These Critiques

To begin with, we might ask whether universal love really contradicts human nature, which must provoke another question: what is really meant by human nature? The “Yang Huo 陽貨” chapter in the *Analects* states: “The Master said, ‘By nature, men are nearly alike; by practice, they get to be wide apart.’”³⁰ Confucius does not make a clear pronouncement on the essential characteristics of human nature, only that human beings are rather like one another in their nature. Confucius also highlights the potential for every human being to

29 Translation taken from “天下-Tian Xia,” <https://ctext.org/zhuangzi/tian-xia/>.

30 Translation taken from “陽貨-Yang Huo,” <https://ctext.org/analects/yang-huo/>.

do good, stating in the “Transmitting [*Shu er* 述而]” chapter in *The Analects*: “The Master said, ‘Is virtue a thing remote? I wish to be virtuous, and lo! virtue is at hand.’”³¹ A key takeaway here is that the decision to do good or evil rests with individuals’ decisions, one that stems from their will. Conversely, Confucius is very mindful of the potential for individuals to do harm, for example, as recorded in the “Yan Yuan 顏淵” chapter in *The Analects*:

The Master said, “To subdue one’s self and return to propriety, is perfect virtue.... Is the practice of perfect virtue from a man himself, or is it from others?” The Master replied, “Look not at what is contrary to propriety; listen not to what is contrary to propriety; speak not what is contrary to propriety; make no movement which is contrary to propriety.”³²

As discussed here, human behavior often violates the standards of “propriety.” Xunzi inferred a dark aspect to the human heart stemming from *yu* 欲 [desire]; in his “Four Sprouts of Xin [*Siduan zhi xin* 四端之心],” Mencius theorized that human nature was essentially good, whereas Mozi emphasized the importance of learning (as a matter of nurture rather than nature). For example, as stated in the “Canon II”: “Learning is of benefit. The explanation for this may be found from the one criticizing.”³³ Learning is beneficial because the voice of the critic also contributes to the act of teaching others how to learn. Mozi opposed the trend in his day in which “learning is of no benefit” [*xue wu yi* 學無益], as reflected in the “Canon I”: “Life is the body being located with the intelligence.”³⁴ Mozi’s concept of the human being encompassed two aspects: a “physical body” [*xingt* 形體] and “mind” [*zhili* 智力], and it is through “nurtured” learning (relying on these two areas of human capability) that different means of gaining knowledge comes through “explanation” [*wenzhi* 聞知], “hearsay” [*shuozhi* 說知], and “personal experience” [*qinzhi* 親知]. People then use “the name” [*mingzhi* 名知], “the object” [*shizhi* 實知], and “how to relate” [*hezhi* 合知] to implement this knowledge into the reality of everyday life. As the “Canon I” states: “Zhi [know]. By hearsay, by explanation, by personal experience. The name, the object, how to relate, how to act”³⁵ – that is, knowledge. The chapter “Will of Heaven III” states: “And Mozi said: Be obedient. Be careful.

31 Translation taken from “述而-Shu er,” <https://ctext.org/analects/shu-er/>.

32 Translation taken from “顏淵-Yan Yuan,” <https://ctext.org/analects/yan-yuan/>.

33 Sun Yirang, *Mozi jiangou*, 2008.

34 Translation taken from “經上-Canon I,” <https://ctext.org/mozi/canon-i/>.

35 Translation taken from “經上-Canon I,” <https://ctext.org/mozi/canon-i/>.

Be sure to do what Heaven desires and avoid what Heaven abominates.”³⁶ The words *wei* 為 [to do on behalf of] and *qu* 去 [to avoid or remove] depend on the free volition of an individual's choice to choose good and avoid evil. Hence, we might say that Mozi's conception of human nature, with its emphasis on the level of “intellect or rationality” [*zhixing* 知性] and “will” [*yizhi* 意志] of a human being, is not necessarily incompatible with Confucian thought. The chapter “Universal Love III” records the following response with respect to whether Mohist philosophy contravenes filial piety:

Mozi replied: Now let us inquire about the plans of the filial sons for their parents. I may ask, when they plan for their parents, whether they desire to have others love or hate them? Judging from the whole doctrine [of filial piety], it is certain that they desire to have others love their parents. Now, what should I do first in order to attain this? Should I first love others' parents in order that they would love my parents in return, or should I first hate others' parents in order that they would love my parents in return? Of course I should first love others' parents in order that they would love my parents in return. Hence those who desire to be filial to one another's parents, if they have to choose (between whether they should love or hate others' parents), had best first love and benefit others' parents.³⁷

Although the ethical conceptions might not be a perfect match, we still might be able to declare that universal love is not in violation of filial piety [*xiaodao* 孝道] when we consider the motivations and effects in Mozi's “discussion of motivation and effects” as well as the “authority” [*quan* 權] tradeoffs involved.³⁸ Looking at the ideals embedded in universal love, the long-term promotion and realization of universal love would certainly encourage a general or universal sense of filial piety from the perspective of a more expansive landscape in time and space.

Let us next turn to the question of whether Mozi was really ignorant of the important role played by propriety and music in establishing social order. Mozi's “identification with the superior” [*shangtong* 尚同] and “conformity to the sages” [*shangxian* 尚賢] demonstrate his concern about removing the

36 Translation taken from “天志下-Will of Heaven III,” <https://ctext.org/mozi/will-of-heaven-iii/>.

37 Translation taken from “兼愛下-Universal Love III,” <https://ctext.org/mozi/universal-love-iii/>.

38 Lee Hsien-chung 李賢中, *Moxue lilun yu fangfa* 墨學理論與方法 [*Mohism: Theory and Method*] (Taipei: Yangzhi wenhua shiye gufen youxian gongsi, 2003), 140–42.

ills of chaos in the world [*tianxia zhiluan* 天下之亂] in the establishment of an orderly society. This normative template on which Mozi focused is based on, on the one hand, a transcendent will of Heaven [*tianzhi* 天志] as the supreme standard [*fayi* 法儀] and, on the other hand, the instinctive desire of all people to cleave to the good and avoid harm or evil, an instinct also motivated by the commendation and punishment of heaven and those in higher positions. Mozi did not comprehensively negate the role played by “propriety” and “music.” His was a partial rejection, as recorded in the chapter “On Ghosts III [*Mingui xia* 明鬼下]” in the *Mozi*:

While he was working in the temple, a wizard carrying a cane appeared and said to him: “Guan Gu, why don’t the jades and stones measure up to the standard, and why are the cakes and wine unclean, and the victims imperfect and not fat, and the sacrifices not in season?”³⁹

This passage reveals Mozi’s appreciation of the finer details of “sacrifice” [*jili* 祭禮]. Regarding Mozi’s apparently “anti-music” philosophy, we would also do well to look at this question with regard to issues of fairness (or the lack thereof) across the wider society. Indeed, the dukes and nobility in those days were known for profligate, wasteful lifestyles that contributed to a shortage of food and sufficient clothing for the average person. As also recorded in the chapter “Against Music I”: “There are three things that the people worry about, namely, that the hungry cannot be fed, that the cold cannot be clothed, and that the tired cannot get rest. These three are the great worries of the people.”⁴⁰ It also appears evident that Mozi was well aware of the power of “musical activities” to bring people comfort and joy. As recorded in the chapter “Against Music I”:

So the reason ... Mozi condemns music is not [that] that the sounds of the big bell, the sounding drum, the *qin* and the *se* and the *yu* and the *sheng* are not pleasant, that the carvings and ornaments are not delightful, that the fried and the broiled meats of the grass-fed and the grain-fed animals are not gratifying, or that the high towers, grand arbors, and quiet villas are not comfortable. Although the body knows they are comfortable, the mouth knows they are gratifying, the eyes know they are delightful, and the ears know they are pleasing, yet they are found not to be in accordance with the deeds of the sage-kings of antiquity and not

39 Translation taken from “明鬼下-On Ghosts III,” <https://ctext.org/mozi/on-ghosts-iii/>.

40 Translation taken from “非樂上-Condemnation of Music I,” <https://ctext.org/mozi/condemnation-of-music-i/>.

to contribute to the benefits of the people at present. And so Mozi proclaims: To have music is wrong.⁴¹

We can see here that Mozi was not entirely opposed to propriety and music [*liyue* 禮樂] but, rather, was particularly mindful of the surrounding everyday living conditions under which it was to be practiced. For example, Mozi's philosophy of frugality in funerals opposed ornate funerals involving excessively long periods of mourning because this incurred an unreasonably difficult burden on the average person.

Did Mozi establish too narrow and restrictive a philosophy? We can observe a repeated emphasis in every section of Mozi's canon: "The purpose of the magnanimous lies in procuring benefits for the world and eliminating its calamities."⁴² This statement indicates the sheer vastness of Mozi's vision and the heights of Mohist ideals. Many other philosophies have come into conception with the underlying backdrop created by Mohist thought, and many alternative theories that would resolve problems of the day also had substantial limitations. For instance, Xunzi, Mozi's critic, appears to suffer from similar theoretical deficiencies, and Xunzi's theories on the evil of human nature do not reflect philosophical aspects inherited from Confucius. We might as well declare that Mozi put forward a philosophy on a level hitherto unseen in other pre-Qin dynasty [before 221 BCE] scholars, with a positive impact on the time in which he lived.

Let us now turn to the question of whether Mohist thought is excessively idealistic, overly bound by formulaic precepts, and unattainable in reality. To begin with, our assessment of a particular school of thought cannot be judged based on the criterion of whether its ideals are achievable because this is also a fate that has befallen many of humanity's ideals to this day, including the "unity of man and nature" [*tianren heyi* 天人合一] of the Confucians, the "ascending to the Dao" [*dengjia yudao* 登假於道] of the Daoists, and the ethereal plane and paradigmatic ideals of the "sages" [*shengren* 聖人], "mighty ones" [*daren* 大人], "supreme ones" [*zhiren* 至人], and "celestials" [*shenren* 神人], which are often unachievable by the average person. But such a school of thought should not thereby lose its value. Similarly, the Mohist ideals of "universal love and mutual aid" and "procuring benefits for the world and eliminating its

41 Translation taken from "非樂上-Condemnation of Music I," <https://ctext.org/mozi/condemnation-of-music-i/>.

42 Translation taken from "尚同中-Identification with the Superior II," <https://ctext.org/mozi/identification-with-the-superior-ii/>.

calamities” have not been generally realized as yet but may still retain value as that which aspiring individuals in each successive generation can continue to work toward and hope to achieve.

3 Han Fei’s Repurposing of Mohist Philosophy

3.1 *The Use and Repurposing of the Mohist Standards in the Han Fei zi*
 The “On the Necessity of Standards [*Fayi* 法儀]” chapter in the *Mozi* states: “There are numerous parents in the world but few are magnanimous.... There are numerous teachers in the world but few are magnanimous.... There are many rulers in the world but few are magnanimous.”⁴³ Mozi believed that it was only on account of Heaven that the highest ethical practitioners can exist; it is only on account of *tian* that *fa* 法 [norms, laws, a legal system] can exist because the love of Heaven for all the world’s living things is a pure and unselfish love. Indeed, the love of Heaven for human beings does not seek to use people as a means to something else but takes the form of a love focused on people for their own sake. This is the root source of utmost value in the universal love ethical philosophy – that is, with “Heaven” as our “Standard.”

Then we might ask: but what are the characteristics of “Heaven”? And how might we follow Heaven? The chapter “On the Necessity of Standards” states: “Heaven is all-inclusive and impartial in its activities, abundant and unceasing in its blessings, and lasting and untiring in its guidance.”⁴⁴ We can here observe that Heaven’s love is granted universally to all people in a manner akin to sunlight or rain. This is the universal nature of “all-inclusive and impartial in its activities.” Furthermore, “abundant and unceasing in its blessings” is a reference to the unselfish nature of this love, which has something of an impersonal or objective nature. We can further observe the clarity and permanence of Heaven from the term “lasting and untiring in its guidance.”⁴⁵ Thus, “Heaven” as a source of value has universal, objective, clearly defined, and permanent characteristics, such that it can make it a standard of conduct for human beings.

Han Fei drew on Mohist theory on “On the Necessity of Standards” but, instead, emphasized *fa* [the standard] as the provider of guiding norms, rather

43 Translation taken from “法儀-On the Necessity of Standards,” <https://ctext.org/mozi/on-the-necessity-of-standards/>.

44 Translation taken from “法儀-On the Necessity of Standards,” <https://ctext.org/mozi/on-the-necessity-of-standards/>.

45 Wang Zanyuan 王讚源, *Mozi* 墨子 (Taipei: Dongda tushu gongsi, 1996), 85.

than a “Heavenly based” *fayi*. Thus, when *fa* is used as the normative basis or underlying principle for everything, all human beings would stand before the law as equals.

The “Having Regulations [*You du* 有度]” chapter in the *Han Fei zi* states:

Thus, every intelligent ruler ordered his ministers never to realize their wishes outside the realm of law and never to bestow their favors inside the realm of law – in short, never to commit any unlawful act. As strict laws are means to forbid extra-judicial action and exterminate selfishness and severe penalties are means to execute decrees and censure inferiors, legal authority should not be deputed to anybody and legal control should not be held behind the same gate. Should legal authority and control be kept in common by both ruler and minister, all varieties of wickedness would come into existence. If law is of no faith, its enforcement by the ruler is absurd. If penalty is not definite, culprits cannot be overcome. Hence the saying: “The skillful carpenter, though able to mark the inked string with his surveying eyes and calculating mind, always takes compasses and squares as measures before his marking; the great genius, though able to accomplish his task with swift move, always takes the law of the early kings as the ruler before his accomplishment.” Thus, if the inked string is straight, crooked timbers will be shaved; if the water-level is even, high gnarls will be planed down. Similarly, if weights and balances are well hung up, what is too heavy will be decreased and what is too light will be increased; once pecks and bushels are established, what is too much will be decreased and what is too little will be increased. Hence to govern the state by law is to praise the right and blame the wrong. The law does not fawn on the noble; the string does not yield to the crooked. Whatever the law applies to, the wise cannot reject nor can the brave defy. Punishment for fault never skips ministers, reward for good never misses commoners.⁴⁶

This indicates Han Fei’s belief in a supreme authority governing the norms of human behavior, that is, a system of laws under which all people – whether rich or poor – stand as equals. Whereas Mozi discussed the equality of humankind with reference to universal love, Han Fei, instead, looks to “legal governance” [*fazhi* 法治] in his discussion of it.

The “Six Contrarities [*Liu fan* 六反]” chapter in the *Han Fei zi* records:

⁴⁶ Translation taken from Liao, *The Complete Works of Han Fei Tzū*, 27–8.

The sage, in governing the people, deliberates upon laws and prohibitions. When laws and prohibitions are clear and manifest, all officials will be in good order. He makes reward and punishment definite. When reward and punishment are never unjust, the people will attend to public duties. If the people attend to public duties and officials are in good order, then the state will become rich; if the state is rich, then the army will become strong. In consequence, hegemony will be attained. The enterprise of the Hegemonic Ruler is the highest goal of the lord of men. With this highest goal in view the lord of men attends to governmental affairs. Therefore, the officials he appoints to office must have the required abilities, and the rewards and punishments he enforces must involve no selfishness but manifest public justice to gentry and commoners.⁴⁷

Here, we can observe the normative role played by the law on people's behavior, particularly in its "commendation and punishments system" [*shangfa* 賞罰]. Moreover, the law must have a just and fair nature, and officials who execute the law must also be public minded and not selfish or corrupt (comparable to the "Heaven" and *gui* 鬼 [demon, spirit, devilish] natures noted by Mozi).

3.2 *The Han Fei zi's Use and Repurposing of Mozi's "Identification with the Superior"*

The chapter "Identification with the Superior II [*Shangtong zhong* 尚同中]" in the *Mozi* states: "[Heaven] chose the virtuous, sagacious, and wise in the world and crowned him emperor, charging him with the duty of unifying the wills in the empire."⁴⁸ The chapter "Identification with the Superior I" also states:

If, however, the people all identify themselves with the Son of Heaven but not with Heaven itself, then the jungle is still unremoved. Now, the frequent visitations of hurricanes and torrents are just the punishments from Heaven upon the people for their not identifying their standards with the will of Heaven.⁴⁹

We observe here that the political order Mozi has constructed has a rather pyramidal structure, with Heaven at the highest level and ordinary people

47 Translation taken from Liao, *The Complete Works of Han Fei Tzū*, 304–5.

48 Translation taken from "尚同中-Identification with the Superior II," <https://cext.org/mozi/identification-with-the-superior-ii/>.

49 Translation taken from "尚同上-Identification with the Superior I," <https://cext.org/mozi/identification-with-the-superior-i/>.

at the bottom, between which we find various officers of the state of various ranks – the highest of which is the emperor, or son of Heaven [*tianzi* 天子], who must also follow Heaven's commands. The supreme position of the political pyramid envisaged by Han Fei was occupied by the monarch [*guojun* 國君], who enjoyed supreme authority. These conceptions may have had something to do with the philosophers' respective eras: Mozi lived during the early Warring States period and Han Fei the latter part of the same period, when the flames of war between the different princes of each kingdom burned with ever greater intensity. We could also look at the way in which the specific instructions communicated in the "will of Heaven" in Mohist thought were rather ambiguous in nature and appeared to Han Fei to be substantially less clear and effectively executed than a monarch's ordinances. Han Fei did not believe in ghosts and spirits [*guishen* 鬼神] and hence relegated the supreme authority to the monarch. In the Mohist political order, subordinates should follow the instructions of their superior, provided that noble or sage-like people [*xianzhe* 賢者] occupied these positions. However, if there were areas in which the superior officer of the state did not satisfy Heaven's will, then provision was made for this situation to be remedied. This system takes the "will of Heaven" as the standard by which to appraise good and evil.

The chapter "Identification with the Superior I" states:

What the superior thinks to be right all shall think to be right; what the superior thinks to be wrong all shall think to be wrong. When the superior is at fault there shall be good counsel, when the subordinates show virtue there shall be popular recommendation. To identify oneself with the superior and not to unite oneself with the subordinates – this is what deserves encouragement from above and praise from below. On the other hand, if upon hearing good or evil one should not report to a superior; if what the superior thought to be right one should not think to be right; if what the superior thought to be wrong one should not think to be wrong; if when the superior was at fault there should be no good counsel if when the subordinates showed virtue there should be no popular recommendation; if there should be common cause with subordinates and no identification with the superior – this is what deserves punishment from above and condemnation from below. The superior made this the basis of reward and punishment. He was clear-sighted and won his people's confidence.⁵⁰

50 Translation taken from "尚同上-Identification with the Superior I," <https://cctext.org/mozi/identification-with-the-superior-i/>.

We observe that a certain relationship exists between the “will of Heaven” and the “opinions of the people” [*minyì* 民意]: commendations and punishments that comply with the will of Heaven will be praised by the people; commendations and punishments that do not comply with the will of Heaven will, by contrast, meet with the opprobrium of the masses. This provides us with a perspective on the existence of a certain association between the opprobrium or support of the people and the “will of Heaven.” In other words, in Mozi we find a single transcendent and universal criterion that serves as a basis for commendation and punishment by the government.

Han Fei learned from and emulated Mohist political philosophy. Although he did not provide any transcendent basis after appointing supreme authority to the monarch, he continued to maintain the requirement that commendations and punishments must be consistent with the views of the masses in order for governance to be effective. The “Eight Canons [*Ba jīng* 八經]” chapter in the *Han Fei zi* states:

Generally speaking, the order of All-under-Heaven must accord with human feelings. Human feelings have likes and dislikes, wherefore reward and punishment can be applied. If reward and punishment are applicable, prohibitions and orders will prevail and the course of government will be accomplished.⁵¹

We see here that Han Fei places importance on the fact that commendations and punishments must correspond to behavior (whether positive or negative) and that the commendation and punishment by the monarch must comport with the ethical aspects of human feelings.

3.3 *The Han Fei zi's Recognition of Mozi's Innovative Philosophy*

The “Geng Zhu 耕柱” chapter in the *Mozi* records:

Gong Mengzi said: “The superior man does not create but transmits.” Mozi said: Not at all. The most unsuperior men do not transmit the good of old and do not create any good for the present. The less unsuperior men do not transmit the good of old, but will bring out the good which he possesses for the sake of praise. Now to transmit but not to create is not different from creating without transmitting. It seems to me what good there

51 Translation taken from Liao, *The Complete Works of Han Fei Tzū*, 314.

is of old one should transmit it; what good there is to be for the present, one should institute it, so that the good may increase all the more.⁵²

As we observe in this passage, Mozi was not blindly tied to the philosophies of the ancients but, rather, was willing to pursue innovative ideas.

The “Canon II” states: “In the case of Yao’s *yi* [right conduct, righteousness, and justice], it is heard of in the present but is located in the past, and these are different times. The explanation lies in what is *yi* being two.”⁵³ Mozi thus evinces a strong awareness of the differences between the days of antiquity and those of the “present” and will not be “swept up” by mere mimicry of whatever is ancient.⁵⁴

The “Anti-Confucian [Feiru 非儒]” chapter in the *Mozi* states:

The Confucian says: “The superior man must be ancient in mode of speech and in dress before he can be magnanimous.” We answer him: The so-called ancient speech and dress were all modern once. When the ancients first used that speech and wore that dress they would not be superior men (according to the Confucianists’ criteria). Do you therefore mean to say that one has to wear the dress of the non-superior man and speak the speech of the non-superior man before he can be magnanimous?⁵⁵

Although Mozi’s “method of three standards” indeed have aspects grounded in antiquity, for example, Mozi’s “We should look to the deeds of the ancient sage-kings,” or based in antiquity, for example, “We should examine the deeds of the sage-kings,”⁵⁶ these canons still have an abundance of original thinking. For instance, Mozi highly disapproves of certain bygone sensibilities, such as those of Confucians who declared that a gentleman must follow the same manner of speaking and dress as those of old who were truly considered “gentlemen.” Mozi ingeniously draws readers’ attention to the fact that those ancients were originally responsible for inventing new manners of speech and clothing by inference and, so, are thereby revealed to have been innovators themselves. This line of thinking also shows up in Han Fei’s philosophy.

52 Translation taken from “耕柱-Geng Zhu,” <https://ctext.org/mozi/geng-zhu/>.

53 Translation taken from Johnston, *The Mozi*, 459.

54 Wang Zanyuan 王讚源, *Mojing zhengdu 墨經正讀 [A Right Reading of the Mohist Canon]* (Shanghai: Shanghai kexue jishu wenxian chubanshe, 2011), 133.

55 Translation modified slightly from “非儒下-Anti-Confucianism II,” <https://ctext.org/mozi/anti-confucianism-ii/>.

56 Translation taken from “非命上-Anti-Fatalism I,” <https://ctext.org/mozi/anti-fatalism-i/>.

The “Five Vermin [*Wu du* 五蠹]” chapter in the *Han Fei zi* states:

Hence the saying: “There are as many situations as there are generations.” In the time of Shun the Miao tribes disobeyed. When Yu moved to send an expedition against them, Shun said: “By no means. As our Teh [De] is not great, any resort to arms is not in accord with the Tao [Dao].” Thenceforth for three years he cultivated the ways of civic training and then he made a parade of shields and battle-axes, whereupon the Miao tribes submitted. In a subsequent age, during the war with the Kung-kung 共工 tribes men using short iron weapons hardly reached their enemies while those whose armor was not strong suffered bodily injuries. It means that mere parade with shields and battle-axes once effective in olden times is not so at present. Hence the saying: “Situations differ, so measures change.” Men of remote antiquity strove to be known as moral and virtuous; those of the middle age struggled to be known as wise and resourceful; and now men fight for the reputation of being vigorous and powerful.⁵⁷

Han Fei took the view that if the times changed, then the situation must change as well. If the situation changed, then so too must related matters. We observe Han Fei’s perspective on history here and the way in which the present passes into the realm of antiquity [*biangu* 變古], which is also an affirmation of Mozi’s creative tendencies.

The “Facing the South [*Nan mian* 南面]” chapter in the *Han Fei zi* states:

Those who do not know the right way to political order, always say, “Never change ancient traditions, never remove existing institutions.” Change or no change, the sage does not mind. For he aims only at the rectification of government. Whether or not ancient traditions should be changed, whether or not existing institutions should be removed, all depends upon the question whether or not such traditions and such institutions are still useful for present-day political purposes.⁵⁸

This section highlights Han Fei’s perspective on suitable criteria to judge whether to change or not to change a standard: will a change promote effective governance of the country? Han Fei not only approved of Mozi’s innovative ideas, but even pursued an improved state of affairs with greater zeal. These three areas highlighted provide us with a sufficient glimpse into Han Fei’s usage and

57 Translation taken from Liao, *The Complete Works of Han Fei Tzū*, 326.

58 Translation taken from Liao, *The Complete Works of Han Fei Tzū*, 90.

modification of Mohist philosophy during the latter Warring States period and furnishes us with a stronger understanding of the profound impacts wrought by Mozi in this period of history.

4 Foundations and Directions in the Modern Transformation of Mohism

4.1 *Today's Era*

Since the terrorist attack on New York City on September 11, 2001, terrorism has become part of the global consciousness, and so has a renewed appreciation for potential threats posed by other terrorist organizations. The Security Council of the United Nations swiftly established the Counterterrorism Committee that year, to which was added the Counterterrorism Committee Executive Directorate in 2004 to carry out anti-terrorist work on a global scale; its missions include legislative penalties for financing terrorist activities, to block all support for terrorism, sharing of counterterrorism intelligence among countries, and promotion of international cooperation in investigations on terrorist organizations. Nevertheless, terrorist attacks have been committed one after another across a broad range of jurisdictions, from Paris (France) to Ankara (Turkey) to Brussels (Belgium). It appears the world has entered a vicious cycle of increasing terrorism and increasingly vigorous countermeasures. This reminds us of a section of the chapter "On Ghosts III":

The people practice immorality and wickedness and become rebellious. Thieves and bandits with weapons, poison, water, and fire hold up innocent travelers on the highways and the bypaths, robbing them of their carts and horses, coats and fur coats, to enrich themselves. All these start therewith [with the passing of the sage-kings]. And so the world falls into chaos.⁵⁹

The picture presented here is not entirely dissimilar to the world we see today, over two millennia later.

From an environmental perspective, not only has humanity failed to be aware of and appreciate the precious bounty in our possession and to cherish Mother Nature but, instead, it has in many ways abused our natural environment and wasted natural resources in a rather rapacious manner. Many

59 Translation, slightly modified, taken from "明鬼下-On Ghosts III," <https://ctext.org/mozi/on-ghosts-iii/>.

so-called natural disasters have their roots in human activity (e.g., earthquakes, tsunamis, floods, and landslides), in which human beings are responsible for irresponsible land clearing and logging, the establishment of housing in flood-prone areas, generating significant amounts of air pollution, and creating voluminous amounts of refuse that have contaminated water supplies. These and other such issues are the subject of never-ending reports in the media: global warming, increasing destruction of the ozone layer, reduction in the world's forests, the extinction or near extinction of protected species, various energy crises, and so on. Many scientists currently take the view that humanity's improper use of technology and the destruction of our environment may well cause permanent and lasting damage to the ecosystem and could even lead to the destruction of human civilization as we know it.

Manmade destruction, leading to instability in global ecosystems, and the increasing severity of truly global problems and crises are publicly visible and knowable facts. It is certainly not easy for humanity to arrive at a common consensus or achieve our objectives. However, perhaps we can find something of a guide in the ancient wisdom of China's Mozi and his spirit of "universal love" to find a path out of today's global disorders.

4.2 *The Basis of the Modern Mohist Transformation*

The purpose of providing an overview in the preceding paragraphs about pre-Qin era critiques of Mohist philosophy and an examination of the impact of Mohism on the various thinkers and schools of the day is to highlight the fact that the transformation of a philosophical system in antiquity into a modern trend must take into consideration the interactive relationship between different schools' philosophies and the multitudinous interwoven "threads of influence." Thus, it behooves us to locate the basis of Mohism's modern transformation with reference to the changing philosophical trends in the pre-Qin era and process of critique and debate between these different schools of thought as we appreciate the interactive relationships between the Mohists and the Confucians, Daoists, and Legalists at the time.

Beginning with the relationship between Mozi and Confucian philosophy, the chapter "Overview of the Essentials [*Yao lue xun* 要略訓]" in the *Masters from Huainan* [*Huainanzi* 淮南子] states:

Master Mo studied the work of the Confucians and received the techniques of Confucius. [However,] he regarded their rituals to be worrisome and inappropriate, their lavish funerals to be wasteful of resources, impoverishing the people, while their lengthy mourning periods harmed

life and impeded undertakings. Thus, Master Mo rejected the Way of the Zhou dynasty and used the regulations of the Xia dynasty.⁶⁰

Judging from these sentiments, it appears that Mohist philosophy diverged from Confucian thought due to dissatisfaction with the “original” philosophy, with the unreasonable aspects criticized and improved and the reasonable aspects expanded and more deeply explored. Hence, an integrated Confucian-Mohist perspective should prove helpful to a more thorough examination of its worth today and might have something of value to offer by way of reflection on or application to modern society. Hence, the modern transformation of Mohist thought must incorporate the intellectual resources of Confucian philosophy.

As Han Yu reflected:

The Confucians ridicule the Mohists’ “identification with the superior,” “universal love,” and “conformity to the sages,” belief in the spirits and celestials, and so forth, and yet Confucius himself showed reverence toward officials of state and would speak no evil words against the officials of any state. Is not Confucius’ ridicule of tyrannical ministers in his *Spring and Autumn Annals* a reflection of [or an attitude of] “identification with the superior?” Are not Confucius’ ideas around caring for the people, carrying out acts of benevolence, and identification of the Sage with the broad giving of alms to the people a reflection of universal love? Could not Confucius’ praise for disciples on the basis of talent, ethical conduct, speech, political affairs, and literary learning [the four subjects] and view that to die without establishing a good name to be a source of shame akin to conformity to the sages? Confucius advocated that we should be reverent when offering worship to ancestors as if those same ancestors were standing before us, and ridiculed those false and non-genuine worshippers, saying, “I shall benefit from the ancestors’ bounty by this worship.” Is that not [in some way] a demonstration as to the existence of the spirits and celestials? Both the Confucians and Mohists give praise to Emperor Yao and Emperor Shun and both oppose Jie of Xia and King Zhou. Both schools focus on the cultivation of an upright heart in the governance of the nations. How is it that we have come to [the situation] today where neither school endorses the other? I believe

60 Translation taken from John S. Major, Sarah A. Queen, and Andrew Seth Meyer et al., trans., *The Huainanzi: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Government in Early Han China* (New York: Columbia University Press), 998–99.

that the split came about through the students of posterity and was so in order for them to elevate their teachers' theories to others. This was not, in fact, a true reflection of their masters' thinking. Confucius must look at Mencius' thinking. Mencius must look to Confucius' thinking. Such a mutual examination is necessary to adequately conceptualize each school's respective views.⁶¹

These paragraphs highlight the manifold similarities and sympathies between the two scholars, whose views could well be integrated to an extent.

Turning to another domain of Mencius' theory on the good nature of human beings [*xingshan lun* 性善論], we can read about Mencius' example demonstrating the existence of a "commiserating heart" [*ceyin zhixin* 惻隱之心] common to humankind in his argument:

If men suddenly see a child about to fall into a well, they will without exception experience a feeling of alarm and distress and that they will feel so, not as a ground on which they may gain the favor of the child's parents, nor as a ground on which they may seek the praise of their neighbors and friends, nor from a dislike to the reputation of having been unmoved by such a thing.⁶²

It is clear that the impetus of the "commiserating heart" triggered by human nature is a type of love that exceeds the narrow limits of blood relationships and disparities between human beings but, instead, points in the direction of all humankind. Although Mencius was also a vehement critic of Mozi's "universal love" philosophy, it is also interesting to see hints of the "universal love" spirit shining through the core precept of the "theory that people are basically good" in Confucian philosophy. Thus, the modern Mohist transformation should take care to emphasize the compatibility between the foundations of Confucian thought and Mozi's "universal love."

Xunzi's classic example that "everyone is born with desires" [*ren shenger youyu* 人生而有欲] in his theory that "humanity has an evil disposition" [*xing e lun* 性惡論] is also very connected to Mohist philosophy, given that Mozi also acknowledged that human beings have an innate yearning or disposition to cleave to the beneficial and avoid the ill. Mozi's "universal love," after all,

61 Han Yu 韓愈, *Han Changli wenji jiaozhu* 韓昌黎文集校注 [Collation of the Han Changli Collection], coll. Ma Qichang 馬其昶 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1986), 39–40.

62 Translation taken from "公孫丑上-Gong Sun Chou I," <https://ctext.org/mengzi/gong-sun-chou-i/>.

is meant to be a kind of desire that tends to satisfy the mutual interests of all human beings. Mozi believed that human relationships in an ideal society would reward individual contributions to society and others in one form or another and that if every individual's value to society could be acknowledged as such by that society, then society would find a way, through various channels, to satisfy individuals' corresponding and reasonable needs. The "universal love and mutual aid" advocated by Mozi and his principle of equal and mutual recompense are precisely aimed at the establishment of such an ideal society. Hence, a modern transformation of Mohism must emphasize the positive results of disseminating the practice and philosophy of "universal love and mutual aid."

Turning to Zhuangzi's critique of Mozi as having adopted overly transcendent and unrealistic philosophical positions, if we were to walk in the Mohists' shoes and survey the land at a time that the practical concerns of everyday survival were still paramount, we might find the elevation of a small minority of individuals to a higher ethical plane helpful to relatively few sage-like individuals but much less useful from the perspective of helping the general populace with their problems. Mozi evidently wanted to help solve real-life problems and to build a philosophical framework for doing so, hence it was not possible for him to avoid theoretical presuppositions and certain criteria with which to make value judgments. We need only look to the recognition in Han Fei's philosophy for Mozi's creative thinking to see the ways in which a modern Mohist transformation must be adaptable to circumstances and free to adjust its method of "procuring benefits for the world and eliminating its calamities" in a self-aware manner as dictated by the times. Hence, a modern Mohist transformation must adapt to circumstances while remaining firmly grounded in an unchanging "universal spirit of love."

4.3 *Directions for the Modern Mohist Transformation*

The modern Mohist transformation is directed at the ideals for which the philosophy strives. What are these ideals? Simply put, they are "peace all under Heaven" [*tianxia taiping* 天下太平] and "love between all human beings" [*renren xiang'ai* 人人相愛]. Naturally, we must seek that which is beneficial and eliminate that which is harmful to achieve the former and promote a philosophy of "universal love and mutual aid" and the idea that only with this powerful mutual love and mutually beneficial arrangements between individuals can we promote "peace all under Heaven" to foster the latter. Our ideals are formed out of the deficiencies and imperfections of the everyday to resolve issues in ordinary life and to improve and ameliorate unreasonable circumstances and unjust situations. Thus, Mozi highlights in his chapter "Universal Love III" that

the great evils in the land have come from people's pursuit of their own selfish ends and self-interest, and people who loved only themselves, rather than others. Hence, the work of "procuring benefits for the world" consists of changing "a limited or particular, localized love" [*bie ai* 別愛] into a "bigger picture" universal love by conveying to individuals a superior understanding of the logic that loving others is beneficial not only to the other but also to oneself and by addressing or seeking to reverse the selfish and self-interested aspects of human nature.

The Mohist ideal of "accomplishing great benefits for humanity" uses a method of "universal love" in which individuals help one another for life to provide everyone with the space to survive or even thrive. As stated in the chapter "Universal Love III":

with universal love as our standard, then attentive ears and keen eyes will respond in service to one another, then limbs will be strengthened to work for one another, and those who know the Dao will untiringly instruct others. Thus the old and those who have neither wife nor children will have the support and supply to spend their old age with, and the young and weak and orphans will have the care and admonition to grow up in.⁶³

In this idealized picture of society, we find that disadvantaged and vulnerable groups receive care and protection, and capable individuals in society are proactively willing to help others. As stated in the chapter "Li Yun 禮運" in the *Classic of Rites* [*Li Ji* 禮記]:

Thus men did not love their parents only, nor treat as children only their own sons. A competent provision was secured for the aged till their death, employment for the able-bodied, and the means of growing up to the young. They showed kindness and compassion to widows, orphans, childless men, and those who were disabled by disease, so that they were all sufficiently maintained.⁶⁴

These idealized conceptions all feature a spirit of equality between all individuals.

63 Translation taken from "兼愛下-Universal Love III," <https://ctext.org/mozi/universal-love-iii/>.

64 Translation taken from "禮運-Li Yun," <https://ctext.org/liji/li-yun/>.

5 Conclusion

A utilitarian or even “greed is good” worldview has become extremely prevalent or even dominant in today’s society, an attitude that has no doubt also spurred numerous unwanted changes at a familial and social level. Political, economic, and technological development and so on has led to structural changes in traditional modes of human relationship. It is at such times that we might well look to the wisdom of Mohist thought as we seek to adapt ourselves to such changes and better find our place in the onslaught of the popular philosophies of the era versus traditional thinking with the use of the ethical, logical, and practical characteristics of Mohist thought. In short, we might want to consider the use of Mozi’s “names and disputation” method as we discourse with differing philosophical conceptions and try to promote and realize a “universal love” spirit integrated with Confucian philosophy.

The modern Mohist transformation has three key aspects:

The first is that “procuring benefits for the world and eliminating its calamities” consists of the resolution of local issues with a global mindset. As Mozi’s perspective encompasses “all under Heaven,” this means looking at our entire “global village,” in modern parlance. The object of Mozi’s care and concern is the benefit of all people under Heaven, or all of humanity. Why is it so important to resolve local issues from a global perspective? If we do not look at local problems from a vantage point that takes the whole into account, then solutions may well lead to further, more severe issues. For example, the use of overwhelming force to counter terrorist groups may have proved effective in the short term but has now perhaps helped to seed further terrorist elements around the world, leading to a more widespread lack of security. Hence, the use of a “universal love” method – being inclusive, understanding, or even forgiving toward individuals with respectful attitudes – is a method that should not be overlooked in today’s fight to nullify terrorist ideology.

Second, it involves trying to promote a global philosophy of peace and global environmental awareness via “universal love and mutual aid.” Addressing environmental issues calls in particular for a holistic perspective of world affairs. For instance, if our “solution” to a local issue of contamination or pollution is simply to emit or transport exhaust gas, contaminated water, metal, or discarded nuclear fuel abroad, then the result might ultimately prove harmful to every human being on the planet, including the emitters and transporters themselves. The modern Mohist must take care to emphasize the interactivity binding different individuals or entities together in the promotion of global peace, and although two individuals, two groups, or two countries involved in “universal love and mutual aid” are two, they are also, in another sense, one.

Although it might seem that you and I are very much separate, the reality is that we are part of a common community of shared concern, and if we do not find arrangements with mutually beneficial outcomes or extend the hand of respect and compassion toward weaker parties, then harm will undoubtedly be visited on those who might currently benefit from this system in due course, as humanity is part of an integrated whole, and there is only one “global village.”

Third, the modern Mohist seeks to promote technological integration in the spirit of Mozi’s “identification with the superior” and “Mohist methods of thinking” so as to aggregate cultural, social, and natural scientific thought and philosophy into an integrated form in establishing global educational and learning systems. We would do well to emulate Mozi’s attempts at traveling far and wide to promote his message of “universal love” and “non-aggressive philosophy” and seek to train outstanding scholars attuned to Mohist philosophy more broadly to promote the “universal love” spirit through modern information technologies and the internet. In the same vein, we might aspire to integrate knowledge and learning of other domains fields into Mohist educational materials in the hope that Mohist thinking will one day be incorporated into the educational systems of every country to expedite the adoption of the spirit of “universal love” as a common and universal value and to instill the common goal that “we are one” [*tianxia datong* 天下大同] into the objectives of all countries.

Translated by William Green

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Mozi's Doctrines of “Opposing Military Aggression” and “Impartial Love” and Kant’s “Perpetual Peace”

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Abstract

Mozi and Immanuel Kant are two of the best-known philosophers in history to have meditated on the topics of war and peace. Their philosophical outlooks on the origins of conflict and on ways to prevent war and preserve peace for all humankind are similar. But conceptual differences reveal the distinct cultures from which they emerged. Governed by a clear-cut opposition to war, Mozi's thought remains unique. The propositions of “impartial love” and “opposing military aggression” are grounded in this belief, and so are Mozi's effective defense theories and his practice of pacifism, as well as his rational and reflective approach to overcoming warfare – that is, how to go from a state of passive peace to active peace. Kant's program of “perpetual peace” is similar in many regards to Mozi's thinking, but it is also more revealing of the modernity of its own logic, especially because it refers to notions such as democracy, government, and institutions, which are in turn rooted in the more systematic theories advanced in Kant's *Three Critiques*. The ideas of both philosophers profoundly influenced human history, and their value and brilliance are still celebrated today. However, many regions of the world remain afflicted by unceasing conflict between religious or ethnic groups. This is precisely why it can still prove valuable for us to carefully consider the intellectual legacy of two of the greatest thinkers in history. The limitations of their philosophies, especially when it comes to the new challenges now faced by humanity, offer an opportunity for pondering historical issues and modern solutions.

Keywords

community of common destiny – impartial love – Kant – Mozi – opposing military aggression – philosophy of law

1 Introduction: The Grim Picture of International Conflicts Today

Since its very beginning, the historical development of human civilization has invariably been accompanied by incessant competition and conflicts as well as unrelenting warfare. Two world wars caused tremendous losses and destruction. Although no conflicts of a similar magnitude have occurred for more than half a century, local hostilities have been ongoing. They include tragic events such as the Rwandan genocide; the two-thousand-year Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which shows no signs of resolution – on the contrary, because of the inextricability of the situation, it is making all the peacemakers in the world exceedingly anxious; the unceasing hostilities in which the Korean Peninsula has been mired since World War II and in which the competing interests of the world's great powers are at stake. In the Americas and in Africa, confrontations between countries or ethnic groups occur frequently, and terrorist attacks are regularly reported as the leading news in the media. An even bigger cause for concern is the miniaturization of nuclear warheads for which most nuclear powers have already opted, making it the new sword of Damocles hanging over the heads of all humanity.

Yet forces fighting for peace are far from absent. At the international level, the peacekeeping work performed by the United Nations (UN) might at times seem unsatisfactory, but it remains monumental. The UN created peacekeeping forces, and every time conflict erupts between countries or at a regional level, they make Herculean efforts to de-escalate tensions. Their efforts have also been productive in many instances. Moreover, around the world, nongovernmental organizations and famous pacifists have contributed immensely to the eradication of conflict. Theoretical research on "peace studies," beyond the work by the world-renowned Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, for example, by Johan Galtung, has also had a noticeable influence on international relations. Since the end of World War II, the improbable and miraculous feat of ending the violent conflicts due to apartheid in South Africa was accomplished by the movement for reconciliation led by Nelson Mandela [1918–2013]. All of humanity has been greatly inspired and encouraged to move forward by this unique example.

The UN was created based on the knowledge that human conflict and warfare spring from ideology. It is true that this belief does not directly address the deep-seated confrontations and disagreements between ethnic groups, social classes, and religious groups or the divergent interests that underlie war (though, it could also be said that ideology reflects precisely this confrontation of different interests). Nevertheless, this simple belief can lead us to reconsider the “Crusades,” historically launched by Christian fanatics; jihads, waged by Islamist extremists, which plague the world today; or Hitler’s goal of exterminating Jewish people – in short, to rethink all these slogans that lead to atrocities and that are heard repeatedly in various armed conflicts (the Cambodian genocide, to name another one out of many). From minor and short-term disputes to large-scale massacres, the people who launch war can always find a justice-related or religious pretext for doing so. Thousands upon thousands of people continue to meet their end fighting one another on battlefields because of these kinds of slogans. From the Peloponnesian War between Athens and Sparta to the recent US invasion of Iraq war has always unfolded in a similar fashion.

Yet there have been great supporters of peace, such as Mozi 墨子 [ca. 468–376 BCE], Kant [1724–1804], and Albert Einstein [1879–1955], who, in advocating for the end of war and in calling for peace, have all had a tremendous influence. In times such as ours, when tragic conflicts coexist with efforts to promote peace, it is even more necessary to consider the wisdom of those who have reflected on the topic of peace through the ages and to offer a fresh overview thereof, so as to investigate innovative strategies for maintaining peace in the new era. As the most representative thinkers on the topic of peace that the East and the West have produced, Mozi and Kant have been the subject of countless academic theoretical discussions. However, to fully explore their contribution, we need to connect these thinkers with a variety of practical issues.

2 The Eras of Mozi and Kant and the Thinkers Who Influenced Them

Even though two thousand years elapsed between the time Mozi lived and Kant’s lifetime, the two periods were particular in many similar and fundamental ways. The societies in which they lived had in common that they were experiencing dramatic changes, which also caused violent upheavals. In Mozi’s lifetime, the Spring and Autumn period [770–476 BCE] was followed by the Warring States period [475–221 BCE], and although traditional ways of life were increasingly threatened, the Zhou emperors’ authority waned a bit

more every day. The feudal lords, by contrast, competed incessantly in asserting their power. The Han [403–230 BCE], the Wei [403–225 BCE], and the Zhao [403–222 BCE] states continually built up their forces so as to carve up the territory of the Jin state [1033–376 BCE]. As hostilities intensified, the destruction and death they caused increased tremendously. In his lifetime, Confucius [ca. 551–479 BCE] criticized the conduct of powerful ministers in the Lu state [1043–255 BCE] who overstepped their authority and defied the imperial court.

The issue became critical in Mozi's time. The political upper class was becoming more disorganized and corrupt by the day, as the living conditions of the lower classes kept worsening. As a member of the working class, Mozi genuinely felt for the "hungry who cannot find sustenance, for the shivering who cannot be offered clothing and for the laborers who cannot get rest."¹ The Qi state [1046–221 BCE] invaded the state of Lu three times, as the Lu continued to infringe the sovereignty of its less powerful neighbors. After having deeply pondered the limitations of Confucian philosophy, Mozi advocated for propositions that favored the common people. This is the context in which the Mohist school of philosophy emerged and a series of doctrines, such as "opposing military aggression" [*feigong* 非攻] and "impartial love" [*jian'ai* 兼愛], formed in a desire to "deviate from the path taken by the Zhou by applying the policies of the Xia dynasty."²

Kant lived in similarly turbulent times: due to Napoléon Bonaparte's [1769–1821] growing strength, Austria was ultimately defeated and sued for peace in 1806 (two years after Kant's death in 1804), and the Holy Roman Emperor, Francis II [1792–1806], became the emperor of Austria. This was preceded by the War of the Austrian Succession [1740–1748] and then the Seven Years' War [1756–1763], in which the Hapsburgs and Prussia vied for supremacy. On a continent afflicted by these rapid and dramatic changes, society was in constant upheaval, and these conditions stimulated the proliferation of brilliant and revolutionary ideas. Hence, humanity entered a new stage, called the Enlightenment. In other words, the societies in which Mozi and Kant lived not only had in common that they experienced sudden changes and upheaval but also that an intense surge of new ideas emerged out of this unrest that would have a far-reaching impact on society in the future.

When confronted by the suffering caused by warfare, Mozi would constantly meditate on a way to put an end to armed conflict and achieve peace, so as to

1 Sun Yirang 孫詒讓, *Mozi jiangou* 墨子間詁 [*Annotations on Mozi*], ed. Sun Qizhi 孫啟治 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2001), 251.

2 Liu Wendian 劉文典, *Huainan honglie ji jie* 淮南鴻烈集解 [*The Collected Annotations of Great Brightness on the Huainanzi*], coll. Feng Yi 馮逸 and Qiao Hua 喬華 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2013), 709.

“work for the benefit of the people under Heaven and eliminate the scourge of calamities.”³ As a member of the “peasants, artisans, and stall owners,”⁴ Mozi pondered “Confucius’s art”⁵ deeply, and that led him to firmly advocate its replacement with the “Mohist Way,” which would represent the aspirations of the common people, who, after all, constitute the absolute majority of society. Disciples spread and developed his thought, and the Mohist order, which until then had been nonexistent, was established to train leaders of Mohism.

When European societies experienced similar periods of intense warfare and dramatic changes, old ways of thinking were supplanted by new ideological trends. Great intellectual figures then made their mark and gained influence – not only Kant but also generations of thinkers after him. First came Francis Bacon [1561–1626] and René Descartes [1596–1650] and later Denis Diderot [1713–1784] and Jean-Jacques Rousseau [1712–1778]. The ideas that they advanced converged and gave birth to the very modern and typically Western concept of “freedom.” Eventually, a consensus formed in Western society regarding the inalienability of human freedom as well as freedom of worship; in modern times, this belief has had a profound impact on the governance of societies.

Explicit concepts of peace were already in place before the time of Mozi and Kant and their theories on peace. Before Mozi, states would meet, conclude armistices, and form alliances. Even theoretically, two visions shaped ideology at that time: the first was the Military School’s [*Bingjia* 兵家] cautious philosophy of war [*shenzhan* 慎戰], and the second consisted of philosophies on peace advocated by thinkers who preceded Mozi. Among them, the preeminent figure was certainly Laozi 老子 [571–471 BCE], who regarded “weapons as tools of bad omens” and thought that one should “not dare to be the one launching a war, but rather prefer to be the one on the defensive,” and that there was “nothing glorious about conquering.”⁶ There was also Confucius who reinforced the notion of good governance by which “the order to go on a punitive expedition came from the emperor” and no other authority, held that it was “learning and art [that] were enlightening,” and argued that “the most beautiful and the best” thing to do was to obtain power rightfully, not by attacking other states.⁷

3 Sun Yirang, *Mozi jiangou*, 249.

4 Sun Yirang, *Mozi jiangou*, 46.

5 Liu Wendian, *Huainan honglie jizhu*, 709.

6 Wang Bi 王弼, annot., *Laozi Dao De Jing zhu jiaoshi* 老子道德經注校釋 [*Laozi's Collated and Annotated Dao De Jing*], coll. Lou Yulie 樓宇烈 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2008), 80, 173.

7 Zhu Xi 朱熹, *Si shu zhangju jizhu* 四書章句集注 [*Collected Annotations on the Four Books*] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983), 171, 170, 164.

Obviously, these philosophies on peace greatly influenced Mozi and sparked his interest, leading him to ponder issues of war and peace even more.

Similarly, two thousand years later, in the West, Kant was clearly influenced by modern notions of "contracts," "legal institutions," and "freedom," which had been redefined by, for instance, David Hume's [1711–1776] theory of human nature and Rousseau's contract theory. It can be said that before Kant and his theory of peace in particular, discussions on the topics of war and peace had coalesced in an ideology of peace rooted in the notion of divine will, human nature, and natural law. Such was the case with the ideas in Hugo Grotius's [1583–1645] *De jure belli ac pacis* [*On the Law of War and Peace*] and the principle of peaceful coexistence advanced by Emer de Vattel [1714–1767]. The two thinkers articulated propositions that had a major impact on subsequent generations – for instance, that countries were bound by natural law, which in turn was grounded in human nature and not in power. Their perspectives regarding international relations had an even greater impact on the theories of peace by Kant and subsequent generations of Western thinkers. First, they proposed the principle of an "international community." They believed that, because of the world's anarchical state, the replication at an international level of the social order within countries would help to build an international community and regulate behavior among them. Second, they emphasized the importance of international law as a tool for regulating international interactions. Finally, they believed that, even when wars were fought, states should be bound by principles of justice and law in their conduct of war. In forging his theory on peace, Kant found inspiration in the work of these previous thinkers.

3 The Theoretical Foundations of Mozi's Philosophy on Peace

In the West, it is often assumed that no theories on peace emerged in antiquity.⁸ People who hold this belief have come to this conclusion based on a historical perspective that is strictly Western.

There are two types of pacifists: the first is an absolute pacifist whose opposition to all wars is unconditional; the second, by contrast, practices peace based on some conditions and only in some situations. Only someone whose opposition to war is uncompromising should be labelled a "pacifist." Yet, Mozi's

8 "Heping yu feibaoli 和平與非暴力 [Peace and Nonviolence]," in *Jianming Buliedian baike quanshu 簡明不列顛百科全書* [*Encyclopaedia Britannica's Micropaedia*] (Beijing: Zhongguo dabaik quanshu chubanshe, 1985), 3:710. The Chinese edition is based on the edited translation of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica's Micropaedia*.

doctrines of impartial love and opposing military aggression advanced some remarkable elements in the notion of peace. These elements transcend the knowledge of Western thinkers. Mozi not only elaborated theories on the conduct of war but also reflected on effective and concrete social efforts that could be made to oppose war. The defensive military science that he devised, based on the premise that weaker and smaller countries should be defended as they resist foreign enemies, as well as the ultimate ideal of peace that he promoted, demonstrate that, in antiquity, Mozi not only advocated for but also practiced pacifism.

As two of the world's most remarkable philosophers, Mozi and Kant both supported their theories of peace with the sophisticated systems of thinking that they conceived. For this reason, we first have to grasp their theories of life in society in order to truly apprehend how they philosophize about peace. At the same time, their discourses on peace invariably reflect the social context in which they lived as well as concepts and cultural characteristics in their civilizations. This perspective allows us not only to analyze the ideological concepts that they advance but also to draw on wisdom in Eastern and Western cultural ideas that can help us maintain peace and find ways to address the conflicts afflicting humanity today.

If we want to comprehend Mozi's philosophy on peace, we have to clarify the relation between notions such as the "will of Heaven" [*tianzhi* 天志] and "impartial love." Most studies on the pacifist and nonbelligerent dimension of Mohist thought focus their attention only on the sections of the *Mozi* 墨子 titled "Impartial Love [*Jian'ai* 兼愛]" and "Opposing Military Aggression [*Feigong* 非攻]." Yet, if we do not connect these doctrines to the "Will of Heaven" section, as well as to the other "ten credos" [*shi lun* 十論] that make up the *Mozi*, we will fail to fully grasp these two important concepts.

Because the "Opposing Military Aggression" section of the *Mozi* derives its notion that war is a crime from his apprehension of universal human values and legal principles, it simultaneously sheds light on and refutes the attacker's "coveting of the fame of victory" and the invader's psychology.⁹ The reasoning behind the "opposing military aggression" doctrine is to demonstrate the negative aspects and vicious circle of war by contending, for instance, that "if we are to calculate what they gain, it by far does not amount to what they lose" and that "if today you pull people to stop them, they will also pull you and stop you."¹⁰ The doctrine of the will of Heaven argues, by contrast, and out of an ultimate spiritual concern, the irrationality of any wars of aggression. Relying on the doctrine of impartial love, the will of Heaven analyzes the irrationality

9 Sun Yirang, *Mozi jiangou*, 131.

10 Sun Yirang, *Mozi jiangou*, 131, 480.

of war from the utilitarian perspective of "benefits under Heaven" [*tianxia zhi li* 天下之利] and based on the premise that, according to the will of Heaven, by nature all humans are equal. Mohist thought achieves greater profundity precisely because of this type of ultimate concern for humanity. This philosophy transcended the just war theory proposed by Confucians when they affirmed that "the order to go on a punitive expedition came from the emperor" and no other authority. It also avoided the view, popular at the time, that states should pursue only their own benefits. To restate the view of a South Korean scholar, this perspective, which went beyond national interests, prefigured contemporary notions of "international ethics," and therefore even today it could become a foundation for peaceful and friendly coexistence by all peoples.¹¹

More importantly, after discussing the prevention of warfare, Mozi identifies the root causes of war and meditates, ultimately, on how to eliminate war. In other words, he expands his philosophy from the *passive peace* of his theory of opposing aggression to consideration of *active peace*, promoted by impartial love. Mozi thought that people have two different kinds of instincts: the benevolent instinct to seek mutual love and mutual support, and the malevolent instinct to harm one another. He also thought that the root cause of war was humanity's base instincts. In addressing, as an example of this malevolence in human nature, the mass destruction caused by war, the *Mozi's* section on impartial love offers a diametrically opposite proposition: indeed, it contemplates the possibility that "the strong will not control the weak, the majority will not coerce the minority, the wealthy will not humiliate the poor, and the elite nobles will not show disdain for the lowly."¹² On the international stage, China's president Xi Jinping 习近平 once received positive reactions when he cited the following from the *Mozi*: "For people to mutually care for one another will bring order to the world under Heaven, while hate will only bring chaos."¹³ This clearly shows that Mohist thought still has great practical significance today.

Mozi's discourse on impartial love is founded on the notion of the will of Heaven: "The ways of Heaven are great and disinterested, its kindness is profound and unconcerned with itself."¹⁴ This theory of Heaven bestowing favors on all living things in an impartial manner certainly implies that a similar logic should guide human relations, requiring people to care about and benefit one another. Indeed, Mozi extends the idea to interpersonal ethics: "Others will

11 Chung In-cha [Zheng Renzai 鄭仁在], "Mozi de heping sixiang 墨子的和平思想 [Mozi's Philosophy of Peace]," in *Mozi yanjiu luncong* 墨子研究論叢 [Collected Essays on Mozi] (Jinan: Shandong daxue chubanshe, 1993).

12 Sun Yirang, *Mozi jiangou*, 102.

13 Sun Yirang, *Mozi jiangou*, 100.

14 Sun Yirang, *Mozi jiangou*, 22.

love instantly one who loves, and one who benefits others will be benefited by them, too.”¹⁵ However, Mozi also holds that, although people certainly hope that when they find themselves in a difficult situation, someone who believes in “impartial love and mutual aid” will be there to help them, and the same people would not often agree with the proposition that impartial love is practicable. People are thus trapped in a dilemma between what they want to believe for themselves and how they wish that others would act.

To solve this problem, Mozi attempts to explain his arguments in detail, from both a historical and political perspective. When one looks at history, the fact is that those who have been considered supreme beings have all been considered as such because they promoted impartial love, and that is why Mozi refers to them as “impartial rulers” [*jian jun* 兼君], and that is why, generation after generation, people have praised them. This historical tradition had a profound influence on generations of people. Politically, Mozi thought that those in power could issue decrees and use coercive measures to address deep-rooted weaknesses by the people – because the ruler of Chu [1115–223 BCE] liked slender waists, Mozi reminds us, many a minister would agree to go hungry in order to get thin, and because the ruler of Yue [2032–222 BCE] loved those who were brave, the army and the people would vie with each other in raging fury. Hence, Mozi set out a new, tridimensional discourse on war; in other words, rather than simply opposing war, he engages in a deeper philosophical reflection and ends up proposing three specific paths for ending war. First, he thinks that social contradictions and interpersonal conflicts would disappear, by addressing social inequality between the rich and the poor and by eliminating the abuse caused by it. Second, by increasing people’s spiritual awareness, it would be possible to continuously keep in check the malignant aspects of human nature and to encourage benevolence in human nature. Finally, through the implementation of specific policies, the rulers’ guidance would inspire people to take the right path. We have to say, again, that, practically speaking, Mozi’s tridimensional project is still tremendously inspiring and significant, even today.

Mozi’s theory on opposing military aggression is about differentiating between the nature of war and how to end wars involving invasion. Mozi then meditates on how to progress from passive peace to a future in which people will forever coexist in a state of active peace defined by impartial love. In addition to these theoretical discussions, Mozi also led his disciples, so that they could devote their efforts to the realization of the principles of peace that he advocated. Through a series of actions aimed at stopping the Chu from attacking the Song [1114–286 BCE], Mozi successfully prevented the Chu’s invasion

15 Sun Yirang, *Mozi jiangou*, 103.

attempt, when all the plans had already been devised, and the Chu were on the verge of launching a war. This is how Mozi earned the name "Mozi the Defender" [*Mo shou* 墨守].¹⁶

If we approach Mozi's ten main doctrines – which include "moderating expenditure" [*jieryong* 節用], "opposing fatalism" [*feiming* 非命], and "the exaltation of those with merit" [*shangxian* 尚賢] – as a whole, it becomes obvious that, by addressing fundamental social issues, Mozi aimed to carve a path that humanity could take to achieve peace. Indeed, what was most crucial for humanity was not to seek satisfaction by accumulating material wealth but, rather, to seek spiritual growth. Only by relentlessly pursuing the eradication of material desires and the cultivation of moral excellence through benevolence and mutual benefit could humanity progressively elevate its consciousness and morality. Thus motivated psychologically by selfishness and greediness to abuse and waste, people should never cease striving for elevation and for avoidance of war. After individuals, families, and countries can peacefully coexist, an ideal world will finally be possible in which "people are tranquil and unworried"¹⁷ and in which people trust one another and build strong relationships. In this sense as well, Mozi's thinking remains crucially edifying even today.

Practical thinking and philosophical investigation both characterize Mozi's ideas on war and peace. Ultimately, they helped shape a system of thought that, from practice to theory and then to practice again, expects society to progress toward peace: first, ideologically, by discussing how to oppose war and to achieve peace; second, by reflecting on how to vigilantly guard one country's interests even in times of peace (sections of the *Mozi*, such as "The Seven Causes of Anxiety [*Qihuan* 七患]," are mainly dedicated to this topic); and, third, by describing how, when in the position of the smaller nation facing a powerful foreign invasion, one should address the enemy in a well-planned, concerted manner and with all the capabilities one has carefully built to strive for peace without surrendering.¹⁸ However, war remains a perverse

16 See Sun Yirang, *Mozi jianqu*, 482–88.

17 Sun Yirang, *Mozi jianqu*, 198.

18 These ideas and their practice are reflected in the "Gong Shu 公輸" section of the *Mozi*. The "Fortification of the City Gate [*Bei chengmen* 備城門]" section of the *Mozi* explores and summarizes the actual operations by which states that fear invasion, when facing real threats, can employ military strategies and tactics to defend the state and its population's interests. The section addresses comprehensively the art of orchestrating defense: from mobilization before war and the preparation of a concerted plan, to building and strengthening city defenses and clearing the fields so as not to leave anything for the invader, from weaponry to commanding the army, from air defense to other aspects. Regarding Mozi's philosophy on peace in relation to defense in times of war, see my in-depth explorations of the topic: Qin Yanshi 秦彥士, "Mozi chengfang wuqi kao 《墨子》城

phenomenon that goes against both morality and human nature, and, to prevent it, we need to strike at the roots of conflict and eradicate them. Many of the major theoretical views presented in the *Mozi* are actually directly connected to this crucial idea. Indeed, Mozi's theories on opposing aggression and impartial love, far from being focused only on the temperament of individuals, also aim to build the foundations for a society in which violence and its consequences would be eradicated – in other words, to end the various instances of unfair treatment and to spare no effort to build an equitable society (most distinctly, through propositions such as “the exaltation of those with merit,” which were particularly relevant for society back then). The fundamental idea at the heart of this line of reasoning is that, by building an equitable society and elevating people's spiritual outlook – again, by addressing injustice and reducing humanity's selfish and aggressive mentality – it would be possible to achieve mutual benefit, mutual accommodation, mutual respect, and mutual love among people. The idea is also that, through the revision of people's moral patterns and the harmonization of human relations, it would be possible to reduce the intensity of the contradictions and conflicts that exist in societies as well as in international relations. If we look at the principle of “upward conformity” [*shangtong* 尚同] together with “the will of Heaven” (Mozi's ten credos all relate to the fundamental purpose that the will of Heaven represents), the path toward equity, which forms an essential part of Mozi's philosophy on peace, unfolds and goes as follows: to elevate the people's spiritual outlook by addressing social contradictions so as to bring about peaceful coexistence between individuals, families, and countries and ultimately create a trusting and ideal environment in which “people are tranquil and unworried.” This is how, according to Mozi, hostilities can be completely uprooted, and the Great Harmony [*datong* 大同] can be achieved.

Kant's principles present some major contrasts with Mozi's philosophy on peace, and yet, in many fundamental ways, their systems of thought are very similar.

防武器考 [An Examination of City Defenses and Weaponry in the *Mozi*], in *Mozi kaolun* 墨子考論 [An Examination of *Mozi*] (Chengdu: Bashu shushe, 2002), as well as “*Mozi* ‘*Bei chengmen*’ zhupian zonghe yanjiu 《墨子·備城門》諸篇綜合研究 [A Comprehensive Study of the ‘Fortification of the City Gate’ section of the *Mozi*]” (PhD. diss., University of Sichuan, 2006), and the sixth lecture in *Mozi gongkai ke* 墨子公開課 [Public Lectures on *Mozi*], ed. Li Shouxin 李守信 and Shao Changjie 邵長婕 (Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan, 2018).

4 The Theoretical Foundations of Kant's Philosophy of Peace and Its Profound Significance

4.1 *The Three Critiques and Kant's Concept of "Perpetual Peace"*

Kant's theory of peace is supported by an elaborate system of philosophical concepts. Therefore, to examine his theory, we need to approach the topic from the perspective of his three major *Critiques*, had been published earlier – the *Critique of Pure Reason* in 1781, the *Critique of Practical Reason* in 1788, and the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* in 1790. *Perpetual Peace* was published in 1795, thus, by this point, Kant had been reflecting on his philosophical theory of reason in increasing depth for about twenty years. The solid foundations on which his theory of peace rests originated precisely in the theoretical systems that he had long elaborated on. Hence, in order for us to comprehend Kant's ideas regarding peace correctly, we need to connect them to the rest of his philosophical work – his *Three Critiques*, constituting, of course, his most fundamental and major contribution.

In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant believes that the forms (or categories) of human knowledge only fit the phenomenal world and do not apply to the transcendental noumenal world – in other words, things-in-itself cannot possibly be obtained through people's limited capability for understanding. What results from this is that theoretical reason is inferior to practical reason. Human cognitive faculties, which enable theoretical reason, are confined to morality. As for seeking the truth, the realm of freedom to which practical reason can give access is beyond the limit of humanity's intellectual capability. Therefore, when it comes to peace, Kant is not as strikingly confident as Mozi was regarding his own doctrines of universal love and opposition to military aggression. Yet Kant's rational thinking remains profoundly original, and his philosophical theories have made his ideas on peace more influential, in both theory and practice for generations after him. Throughout *Perpetual Peace*, Kant uses an assertive language that is directly and closely related to the fundamental philosophical speculations at the center of his work as well as to his philosophy of religion and his theory of human nature.

In *Kant's Ethical Thought*, the treatise Allen W. Wood devotes to the topic, we can see more clearly the relationship between Kant's thinking on ethics and his philosophy on peace. Summarizing his treatise, Wood concludes that Kant's ethical notions can be encapsulated by referring to three main principles: autonomy, equality, and an international ethical community.¹⁹ If

19 Allen W. Wood 艾倫·伍德, *Kangde de lixing shenxue* 康德的理性神學 [*Kant's Rational Theology*] (Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan, 2014), 108.

we compare them to Mohist thought, they correspond precisely to the self-cultivation, the will of Heaven, and the international ethics advocated by Mozi.

This is the way, through Kant, to better comprehend Mohist thought. Kant believed that absolute moral perfection could not be achieved solely through individual and independent efforts at moral self-improvement. Rather, he held that individuals need to become part of a community by joining with others in a particular purpose. Only through this association with others can human morality achieve perfection. Mozi's thinking regarding the will of Heaven may have received censure, yet it is in exact agreement with Kantian thought: what Mozi originally implied when he spoke of "the will of Heaven" as "unifying all views under Heaven" was not at all that we should act in the service of tyrants – if there were scholars who lean toward such an interpretation. In fact, Mozi thought that "unifying all views under Heaven" would address the kind of conflict in which "individuals fight for their own purpose,"²⁰ conflicts that ultimately wreak havoc under Heaven. The "impartial ruler" who would rally all humanity under the same banner, or the same purpose [yi 義], in fact should be like Yu the Great 大禹, who was both an industrious and a fearless advocate of justice. Only the kind of leader who, as Mencius described Mozi, is ready to "wear himself out from head to foot"²¹ – that is, the "impartial ruler" to which Mozi referred – can guide humanity into carrying out the will of "Heaven" and achieve the purpose of "working for the benefit of the people under Heaven." A fundamental continuity can be found between this conception and Kant's notions of "autonomy" and "equality." The ideas of both thinkers are shared by wise individuals in both the East and the West, who demonstrate a similar longing for peace among humankind and participate in similar discussions on the topic. Kant also believed that human reason was limited and that only God could provide guidance on obtaining scientific knowledge. But humanity could not reach perfection through individuals' independently trying to improve their own morality, and, for this reason, rational individuals should become allied with one another. This is consistent with the meaning and purpose of Mozi's philosophy on upward conformity. Hence, Kant's concepts of autonomy, equality, and an international ethical community can be compared to Mozi's corresponding notions of self-cultivation, impartial love, and a community of international ethics.

Let us reconsider Kant's "international ethics": first, the principle at the basis of an association of states should be moral conduct; second, common

20 Sun Yirang, *Mozi jiangou*, 77–78.

21 Jiao Xun 焦循, *Mengzi Zhengyi* 孟子正義 [*The Correct Meaning of the Mengzi*], annot. Shen Wenzhuo 沈文倬 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1987), 916.

moral principles should be put into practice under conditions that are free and lack coercion; third, common moral principles accept both distinctions among members and a union of them.²² This vision of interpersonal relationships has an ideal of shared redemption to which this type of union relates; thus, it would become impossible for people in such a union to be divided into particular communities with different interests. This point in particular sheds light on how different Kant's political and religious context was from Mozi's. In this respect, Kant's context not only is in contrast to the Eastern cultural background of Mohist thought but also is revealing of the Christian aspects of this major figure of Western philosophy. The sentiment of compassion found in it and its modern limits are both crucially connected to this aspect of his personality. Therefore, before we examine this issue, it is necessary to keep unravelling the philosophical, ethical, political, and religious conceptual ramifications of the unifying peace proposed by Kant. Only then can we correctly and entirely comprehend his theory on peace.

4.2 *Comparing the Ethical and Religious Perspectives of Mozi and Kant as Well as Their Philosophies on Peace*

Kant dedicated treatises such as the *Lectures on the Philosophical Doctrine of Religion* and *Religion within the Bounds of Bare Reason* to the investigation of the specific topic of religion. The views that he expressed are of great help in improving our understanding of his conception of perpetual peace. Kant believed that human reason has limits and that people only had the ability to conceive of things. Beyond this limited capacity, it is the divine in which we believe (i.e., an ideal) that provides us with the guidance we need to obtain scientific knowledge. In practice, the moral rules of conduct to which the so-called divine commandments correspond serve both a binding function and as objective standards for "rational beings" (here we see the influence of the Christian faith and traditions since Moses supposedly received the Ten Commandments).²³

Thus, Kant's religious preoccupations are intrinsically related to the notion of perpetual peace: the limits of rationality require that humanity find ways to extricate itself from the system of rationality. In that sense, religion is not a set of outward procedural dogmas, by which "theology merely serves as a system of morals, namely that it serves a notion of goodness, a way to behave

22 Immanuel Kant 康德, *Yongjiu heping lun* 永久和平論 [*Perpetual Peace*], trans. He Zhaowu 何兆武 (Shanghai: Shanghai shiji chubanshijuan, 2005), 42.

23 Cited in Hong Tao 洪濤, "Lun Kangde de yongjiu heping linian 論康德的永久和平理念 [On Kant's Concept of Perpetual Peace]," *Fudan xuebao* 復旦學報, no. 3 (2014).

that brings joy to the Supreme Being.” Kant believed that there was only one true religion, and Christianity was the one that corresponded to his definition thereof. Yet he was not at all familiar with ancient philosophical traditions in China, whether the Confucian, Mohist, or Daoist school of thought. He was even less familiar with the existence of a Chinese school of Buddhism that also made room for Confucian and Daoist traditions. Hence, for Kant, the “perfect religion” was one that aimed the highest at “breaking away from bare ways of worshipping” and provided the best “path toward a good life.”²⁴ The content of Kant’s concept of “perpetual peace” and the procedural style of its language are both intrinsically related to this vision of religion.

Mozi’s pacifist philosophy of opposing military aggression might not stem from the West’s religious and philosophical cultural background, but the philosophy of peace toward which the “will of Heaven” guides us fundamentally presents the same utmost concern for humanity. However, it is precisely in this regard that the limitations of the philosophy of the two thinkers become evident. More than two thousand years separates us from Mozi and more than two centuries from Kant, and practice has long confirmed that, in the face of the actual challenges of war, their theories need to be upgraded.

From the perspective of social practice, it seems that Kant mainly conducted his philosophical investigations between the walls of his study. By contrast, Mozi, aside from his theoretical thinking, also acted fearlessly and led his disciples into sacrificing their own safety for the sake of practicing the principles of impartial love and opposing aggression that he advocated. In the chapter “Fortification of the City Gate [*Bei chengmen* 備城門]” in the *Mozi*, Mohist disciples also outlined the different strategies and tactics that were part of the long practice by the master and his students of opposing the invasion of smaller states by powerful states. This dimension in particular is in stark contrast to Kant’s work. It also shows how distinct the philosophies of peace by Mozi and Kant remain from each other.

Regarding Mozi’s thought, actions, and lasting influence, the Taiwanese scholar Wei Zhengtong 韋政通 [1927–2018] once famously offered the following critique:

The reason that Mozi was conferred high status in Chinese culture is his opposition to aggression and warfare, his zeal for the salvation of

24 This is translated from the Chinese version and interpretation of Kant’s *Religion within the Bounds of Bare Reason*: Immanuel Kant 康德, *Danchun lixing xiandu de zongjiao* 單純理性限度的宗教 [*Religion within the Bounds of Bare Reason*], trans. Li Qiuling 李秋零 (Beijing: Zhongguo renmin daxue chubanshe, 2003), 208. Several different translations of this passage are available in English.

humankind, and the sustained earnestness of his spirit of sacrifice. His thinking has been valued because it was supported precisely by this spirit. His character not only inspired his generation but has reverberated throughout the ages. This is Mozi's truest and greatest quality.²⁵

And according to the majority of people, it is precisely this spirit of sacrifice that our world may be lacking the most today.

4.3 *Mozi's Philosophy of Peace Gains International Recognition*

Because Mozi's theory on peace transcends both time and geography, it has garnered universal praise, including from many contemporary intellectuals. For instance, Joseph Needham [1900–1995], a well-known historian of science and technology who once shouldered the immense task of writing *Science and Civilization in China*, drew a conclusion of profound significance regarding the peaceful temperament of the Chinese people, shaped by pacifist thinkers from the pre-Qin period [before 221 BCE], such as Mozi and other competing schools. Needham wrote that “while there were many wars in the history of China, there was never the establishment of a military state.”²⁶ In a published conversation, the British historian Arnold Toynbee [1889–1975] and a well-known Japanese philosopher of religion Daisaku Ikeda express a common and critical understanding of Mozi's philosophy on peace, as exemplified by his doctrines on impartial love and opposing military aggression. Toynbee and Ikeda both believe that, when it comes to the issue of international peace today, Mozi's impartial love is more apt to meet humanity's needs than Confucius's benevolence [*ren'ai* 仁愛].²⁷

25 Wei Zhengtong 韋正通, *Xianqin qi da zhexuejia* 先秦七大哲學家 [Seven Great Philosophers of the Pre-Qin Era] (Nanjing: Jiangsu jiaoyu chubanshe, 2006), 107.

26 Joseph Needham 李約瑟 and Robin D. S. Yates 葉山, *Zhongguo kexue jishu shi* 中國科學技術史 [Science and Civilization in China], vol. 5: *Huaxue ji xiangguan jishu: Junshi jishu: Paoshe wuqi he gongshou cheng jishu* 化學及相關技術：軍事技術：拋射武器和攻守城技術 [Chemistry and Chemical Technology: Military Technology: Missiles and Sieges] (Beijing: Kexue chubanshe, 2002), 6:38.

27 Arnold Toynbee and Daisaku Ikeda, *Choose Life: A Dialogue*, ed. Richard L. Gage (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 365. In his conversation with Toynbee, Daisaku Ikeda also praised Mozi's philosophy of impartial love and reaffirmed the immense value for today's humanity of this great spirit of love: “In my view, all people must come to think of peace – the time when no human beings fear any others, when all trust and love each other – as the natural and ordinary way of life. Only when this belief is our guiding principle can a truly human society be created. I regard the propagation of such belief and the consequent building of a human society as the prime duty of political leaders, philosophers, and intellectuals” (p. 219).

To cite another example, the “father of peace studies,” Johan Galtung, believes that it has been historically demonstrated not only that, since antiquity, the topic of peace has been a preoccupation widely shared by the Chinese population but also that no Chinese tradition of territorial expansion has existed in the country, especially among the Han rulers, since the long-standing Confucian tradition of harmonious relationships [*hehe* 和合] was established.²⁸ Hence, at both the domestic and international level, the philosophy of peace that characterizes China’s outstanding cultural tradition – through the work of the Mohists, the Confucians, and the Daoists, among many different philosophies – not only profoundly influenced the Chinese people’s historical development but also left a mark on every country along the Silk Road with which the Chinese have maintained peaceful relations. There is no doubt that this firmly rooted historical foundation can now form a solid bedrock for a future of continuous and friendly relations between the Chinese and peoples in other countries. Yet the ultimate force against war lies with the people; they remain those who can provide the greatest support for the maintenance of peace.

In their conversation, Toynbee and Ikeda share a similar transnational view, which is also found in Mozi’s work. After having addressed the fact that the results of war are always contrary to the expectations of those who launched it, Toynbee discusses the possibility of eliminating all recourse to arms:

War can be abolished, even if it were to prove impossible to cure all human beings of committing nonmilitary crimes of violence.... The assumption underlying the institution of war was that one of the belligerents would win, that the other would lose, and that the advantage of victory for the winner would be greater than the cost. This calculation often proved wrong. Wars were often disastrous for the victors, too.²⁹

This precise point is emphasized in the section “Opposing Military Aggression” in the *Mozi*.

In previous international symposia on Mohism convened by China, Mozi’s conception of peace was largely endorsed by national and regional experts from Japan and South Korea. A South Korean scholar, Chung Inchai 鄭仁在, highly praised Mozi’s theory on peace. In his paper titled “Mozi’s Philosophy of Peace,” he remarked that Mozi was not only the first person in history to

28 Johan Galtung 約翰·加爾通, *Heping lun* 和平論 [*Peace by Peaceful Means*], trans. Chen Zuzhou 陳祖洲 (Nanjing: Nanjing chubanshe, 2006), 189.

29 Toynbee and Ikeda, *Choose Life: A Dialogue*, 219.

present a theory of peace but also the first to put his theory into practice in an attempt to achieve peace. As humanity still lives under the threat of war, and, even more so because of the terrifying menace of nuclear war, it was highly important, according to Chung In-cha, that we reacquaint ourselves with Mozi's invaluable philosophy on peace.³⁰ Other scholars from South Korea also believe that when it comes to international ethics, Mozi's theories of impartial love and opposing military aggression have a very contemporary quality and therefore Mozi's philosophy could become a foundation for peaceful and friendly relations among countries and people today.³¹

Not only has Mozi's philosophy on peace gained international and unanimous recognition, but its theoretical significance has also been demonstrated by the victory of the South African reconciliation movement that followed the end of apartheid. When Mandela was released from prison, some of his fellow citizens loudly demanded sending white people back where to they came from. However, at a critical moment, when racial clashes were about to descend into massacres, Mandela opted to take a nonviolent stand and broke the impasse by dissuading people from resorting to violence. He guided his fellow citizens to exemplifying the ancient *ubuntu* spirit (which is fundamentally similar to Mozi's philosophy on peace), together with people who held similar convictions, such as the Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Albie Sachs [Albert Louis Sachs, a lawyer, writer, and former judge, appointed by Nelson Mandela to serve on the first Constitutional Court of South Africa]. Mandela's struggle may have been extremely arduous, but he accomplished the nearly impossible feat of turning the tide of conflict and leading South Africans on the long road to reconciliation. Ultimately, he ensured the country's peaceful transition and avoided any major catastrophe as well as the several million deaths that could have occurred in racial conflicts. Mandela's achievements stand in stark contrast to the Rwandan genocide that shocked the entire world at the end of the twentieth century. Although these events make us appreciate the immense and almost miraculous significance of the South African reconciliation movement even more, they also allow us to realize even more fully the contemporary value of Mozi and Kant's pacifist thinking. In addition, as I personally learned from meeting figures who have advocated friendship among African nations, Africa needs Mohism's guidance even more today, especially after having gone through the Rwandan massacre.³² This is the sort of event that proves once

30 Chung In-cha, "Mozi de heping sixiang," 186.

31 Chung In-cha, "Mozi de heping sixiang," 189.

32 As a researcher of Mohist thought, I came to know this by meeting twice with the Rwandan consul general stationed in Chongqing, who then invited me to teach Mohist thought in

again the universal value of Mohist thought. It also demonstrates that, as the cultural traditions of ancient China continue to circulate and influence the world, the pacifist thought and wisdom of its ancient sages in particular can play an increasingly important role in building a community with a shared future for mankind [*renlei mingyun gongtongti* 人類命運共同體].

5 Kantian and Mohist Thought in Contemporary “Peace Studies”

Mozi’s philosophy on peace crucially reinforced the peaceful character of the Chinese people, and it also gained international recognition largely through the works of visionaries. As with Kant’s theory on perpetual peace, its influence was even greater, after the two world wars. One of its core concepts, in particular, that is, a structured international authority established by means of a federation of free countries, even became a theoretical pillar for the establishment of the United Nations.³³ Yet since then history has demonstrated that the organization’s role is often restricted or faces interference. Moreover, the extremely complex world conditions post-pandemic might pose new challenges in terms of the maintenance of peace.

For this reason, as we carry forward the heritage of ancient thinkers, such as Mozi and Kant, and reinforce belief in the necessity of achieving a permanent peace, we also need to upgrade the work of the wise people who preceded us. For instance, when it comes to defining the morality of peace, Kant’s Christian notion of a “perfect religion” has recently lost some of its authority, especially considering the increasing apathy about religion we are witnessing today. This is why many philosophers, thinkers, and scientists have begun to explore the topic of peace anew. Among them, Galtung, the “father of peace studies,” has sought to provide a new roadmap to peace. The most important aspect of his work is certainly the inclusion of a wider variety of perspectives from which to investigate the issue of peace – whether through the lens of sociology, cultural studies, or even medicine. Galtung articulated the theory of the opposition between “negative and positive peace,” which is highly reminiscent of Mozi’s theories on impartial love and opposing military aggression, and, practically speaking, he also intervened in the resolution of regional conflicts in more

Rwanda. After a meeting at the Rwandan embassy in Beijing, I was supposed to receive a formal letter of invitation, but because of the pandemic, the offer was postponed. However, this demonstrates the power and particular role of academia with regard to the contemporary task of ensuring the maintenance of peace. It also demonstrates how we, as intellectuals, are duty bound to undertake this task.

33 Kant, *Yongjiu heping lun*, 45.

than a hundred instances (and because of how he succeeded in mediating the conflicts between Ecuador and Peru, he was also nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize). At the same time, Galtung also integrated new features of the world today into his work and expressed the concept of "cultural violence"; by broadening considerably our perspective on how humanity can achieve peace, he drew a new roadmap. Furthermore, to resolve current and seemingly intractable issues, he set out six practical ways in which to achieve peace: global governance, the abolition of war methods, conflict transformation, nonviolence, peacebuilding and development, and peace culture. These new propositions deepened our understanding of peace, but they also inspired us in a different way: for instance, regarding peace and development, Galtung stated that countering the commercial malpractice that affects the current international economy is necessary for decentralizing the factors of production, a measure that would allow everyone to participate in production activities that lead to global economic integration. This offers us a new way in which to reflect the issue of conflict resolution when the roots of hostilities are found in the unfair distribution of wealth between the poor and the already wealthy. In addition, Galtung contrasted the cultures of the East and the West, comparing Western culture's inclination toward violence and its history of colonialism to China's tradition of interconnected schools of thoughts and long pacifist tradition. By doing so, he also emphasized that dialogue between the East and the West is crucial in addressing future conflicts.

In comparison with the West's competitive ideology of the "survival of the fittest," which Galtung believes is intrinsically linked to its tradition of colonialism, the East's Buddhist tradition seems to him much more conducive to the maintenance of peace. He reminds us that the Buddhist doctrine of "dependent arising" [*yuanti* 緣起] is, indeed, rooted in the belief that all living things are connected and that this notion remains fundamental for all humanity. According to Galtung, Buddhism is the only ideology that does not lead directly to violence or to structural violence. This also provides a discourse on peace that is practically significant.³⁴ The new philosophies on peace by Galtung and others overcome the limitations of Kant's Christian-oriented theories, thus, they contribute to addressing the task of peace maintenance, with all the contemporary challenges it poses.

The general psychological and ethical trends in academic research on Mozi's philosophy on peace derive from the inspiration provided by the works of every prominent thinker in world history since Mozi and all the philosophical knowledge that we have accumulated since then. In the modern era,

34 Galtung, *Heping lun*, 186.

innovative academic research, especially in sociology and cultural anthropology as well as philosophy, biology, psychology, and ethics, have enlightened and revolutionized our contemporary understanding of peace.³⁵ For instance, Freud's [1856–1939] theory on the id, the ego, and the superego and Jean Piaget's [1896–1980] child psychology have contributed deeply to our grasp of humanity's mental constructions about peace. Through a series of reforms in education, which involved all the prenatal, preschool, primary, and adult stages of development, and through continuous and determined efforts to change one generation at a time, academic research and teaching continue to play a crucial role in shaping the future. This is a major issue and, in this regard, there are two different tendencies that we should keep an eye on. The first is conservative support of militarism – to which some important figures in the academic world subscribe – as well as its advocates' continuing propaganda (which includes research on historical redress that seeks, in reality, to reverse the verdict on the history of World War II in favor of those who launched it). Another trend is the use of accurate results from scientific research in a potentially harmful way. When it comes to this eventuality, we, as intellectuals, can never be too careful.³⁶

Past research has paid too much attention to the actions of governments or figures in power and not enough to the people that constitute our societies. Current and future research on the topic of peace need to correct this. For instance, the significance of Mozi's philosophy of upward conformity is limited by the excessive consideration it grants to subjectivity and its lack of concern for power dynamics (in other words, Mozi dreamed that the "impartial ruler" who would "unify all views under Heaven" would reign with a determination to achieve "impartial love" and would hence be able to eradicate the chaos of

35 Einstein once said that, in comparison to [Jean] Piaget's child psychology, the theory of relativity was practically child's play. Robert G. L. Waite's famous book, *The Psychopathic God: Adolf Hitler* (Boston: Da Capo Press, 1993), reveals the conditions of the upbringing of the dictator who launched the most devastating war in world history as well as the social factors behind his ascension from a wanderer to a Nazi head of state commanding the support of crowds.

36 In this regard, what followed the publication of the internationally acclaimed book Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990) is especially enlightening: indeed, after the book was published, readers wrote to Dawkins, accusing him of destroying children's hopes for a better future. In response to this criticism, Dawkins later published another book, *Unweaving the Rainbow: Science, Delusion and the Appetite for Wonder* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998), in which he points out that, even though our genes may be selfish, we are still bound to cooperate as a species (our genes may push us to make choices in our own interests, but it is still in our interest to cooperate; in other words, we are "selfish cooperators"). This new conclusion was meant to offer bright hopes for the future.

war).³⁷ Kant's philosophy on peace also presents some problems that deserve our attention: one of them is that there does not exist a unique model of a republican system. Some republican countries have never intended to launch armed conflicts, while other similar systems of governance have always easily resorted to military force in order to resolve their problems. The relentless resort to war not only brings death and destruction to the afflicted countries but also incurs exorbitant military expenses and seriously damages the belligerent country's image and relations with allied countries, which then often brings about self-isolation or other harmful strategies. In addition, in Kant's work, the role of the countries' population seems to be completely overlooked, and it would be quite improbable to find in Kant any allusion to nongovernmental organizations. Indeed, in sharp contrast to Mozi's high respect for the common people's strengths in the defense of a country, in the eyes of Western military scientists, the masses are merely "rabble" that need to be disciplined (in fact, this is precisely how Carl von Clausewitz depicts the militias and the common people in *On War*). Nevertheless, in opposition to the recent unbridled belligerence of some leaders at the head of the most powerful countries in the world (whether George W. Bush's launching of the Iraq War or the resort to a threat of military force by Trump and those like him), pacifist citizens around the world have determinedly fought against war and have striven to maintain peace by every action available to them. From [Mohandas K.] Gandhi's [1869–1948] nonviolent activism to the courageous Malala Yousafzai, who as a girl fought the Taliban's atrocities and earned the Nobel Peace Prize, to pacifist international NGOs such as Greenpeace – all these people contributed to the immense task of striving for peace for all humanity. There are also intellectuals who call for peace and who are dedicated to the just cause of spreading and defending public opinion at an international level. These collective forces have become a major obstacle to those who govern and hold the power to launch wars. Moreover, since the Nuremberg trials and the Tokyo war crimes trials, both the United Nations and international tribunals have constituted a psychological and a legal obstacle to those who would want to resort to war. These doctrines and practices, which did not exist in Kant's lifetime, have become both an effective force and a philosophy in the maintenance of peace, and, even now, they represent our best hope of ending war. The theoretical and practical efforts described above provide the main elements that we need to refine humanity's ideology and the culture of pacifism at a theoretical level.

37 There has been some confusion in this regard, which has led the Mohist school and community to misinterpret their late teacher's notion of "righteousness" [*dayi* 大義] as well as to blindly obey their leaders. This is one of the main internal reasons behind the decline of the Mohist school. For further details on this topic, see the author's *Mozi kaolun*.

In a future when war and peace may well continue to be influenced by the proponents of game theory, many different forces still exist that can play an increasing role and have an impact. As we investigate the human history of war and peace, we should reconcile the thought of philosophers in both the East and the West, including Kant, Bertrand Russell [1872–1970], [Albert] Einstein, Gandhi, and Mandela, and we should also make room for thinkers in the Arab world, the African continent, and other advocates of peace all over the world. For our contemporary fellow humans, but also for the generations who will come after us, we need to gather these valuable resources. This is a moral responsibility that we cannot reject. In deepening our understanding of the current philosophies on peace, we can also ponder various questions that still deserve careful investigation, whether the need to facilitate the role of NGOs or to keep strengthening friendly contacts and exchanges among the people in different countries or, again, the need, for instance, to reduce spending on weapons in order to invest more in improving human well-being, or, finally, the need to restrict the power to launch wars and to enhance the ability of the United Nations to respond both in time and effectively when maintaining peace becomes an issue.

Translated by Kathryn Henderson

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Utilitarianism and the Westernization of Modern Mohist Studies

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Abstract

The term “utilitarianism” in English translates into Chinese as *gongli zhuyi*. When Liang Qichao and Hu Shi first imported the concept of utilitarianism into the study of Mohist thought, the term was initially translated as *shili zhuyi* or *leli zhuyi*. The use of *gongli zhuyi* in Mohist studies was established only through the efforts of Yan Fu and Wu Yu to break down the negative connotations of *gongli* in traditional Chinese culture and through the systematic research and scholarly influence of Feng Youlan. The study of Mohist thought within the framework of utilitarianism as *gongli zhuyi* is now common practice throughout academia with few scholars objecting to the use of this term.

Keywords

Gongli zhuyi – *Leli zhuyi* – Mohist thought – *Shili zhuyi* – Utilitarianism

In the hundred years before and after Hu Shi’s 胡適 [1891–1962] call from the pulpit of the New Culture movement to understand the issues of the times, incorporate Western ideas, systematically reorganize China’s past, and recreate Chinese civilization, the study of pre-Qin [before 221 BCE] thinkers has, under the battle cry of “importing Western theories to achieve democracy,” become a

fertile breeding ground for the proliferation of Western philosophical concepts in China. This rich soil allowed the pre-Qin thinker Mozi 墨子 [ca. 468–376 BCE], who had languished in the shadows of historical neglect for more than two millennia, to become once again the leading “opponent” of Confucius and Confucian studies, with many nineteenth- and twentieth-century Chinese scholars adopting him as the personified representative of classical democracy and scientific thought. Mozi proponents in the Qing dynasty [1616–1911], such as Zou Boqi 鄒伯奇 [1819–1869], Huang Zunxian 黃遵憲 [1848–1905], Chen Li 陳澧 [1810–1882], and Feng Cheng 馮澂 [b. 1866], resurrected passages in the *Mozi* to demonstrate the credibility of the “Chinese origins of Western knowledge” theory.¹

In the early years of the Republic of China [1912–1949], anti-Confucian intellectuals, such as Yi Baisha 易白沙 [1886–1921] and Wu Yu 吳虞 [1872–1949], spoke about the Mohist idea of “exalting unity” [*shangtong* 尚同]² in terms of Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s *Social Contract*;³ and on the eve of the New Culture movement, Hu Shi was analyzing the logic in the text, especially in the dialectical chapters, through the lens of pragmatism.⁴ Meanwhile, in the late Qing and early years of the Republic, the study of Mohist thought found itself bound fast to the social and political philosophical concept of utilitarianism, as promoted in the modern Western Enlightenment.

Like many other terms that spread to China from the West through the medium of translation, “utilitarianism” had to navigate translation issues across different cultures. Changes in the Chinese translation of “utilitarianism”

- 1 Wang Jixue 王繼學, “Moxue dui wan Qing Minguo shehui fazhan de yingxiang 墨學對晚清民國社會發展的影響 [The Impact of Mohism on the Social Development in the Late Qing and Republic Period]” (PhD diss., Shandong University, 2010). Wang Jixue’s thesis provides a detailed account of the historical context behind the theory that held Mozi to be the origin of Western knowledge. The thesis follows the development of the theory and outlines many of the criticisms to which it was subjected.
- 2 All translations of terms and passages from the *Mozi* text have been taken from Ian Johnston’s translation. See Ian Johnston, trans., *The Mozi: A Complete Translation* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2010). – Trans.
- 3 Yi Baisha 易白沙, “Guang Shangtong 廣尚同 [Promoting ‘Exalting Unity’],” in *Yi Baisha ji* 易白沙集 [Collected Works of Yi Baisha], ed. Chen Xianchu 陳先初 (Changsha: Hunan renmin chubanshe, 2008); Wu Yu 吳虞, “Mozi de laonong zhuyi 墨子的勞農主義 [Mozi’s Bolshevism],” in *Xinhai geming qian shinianjian shilun xuanji* 辛亥革命前十年間時論選集 [Collection of Selected Articles from the Ten-year Period Prior to the 1911 Revolution], vol. 3, ed. Zhang Zhan 張枬 and Wang Renzhi 王忍之 (Shanghai: Sanlian shudian, 1977).
- 4 Hu Shih, *The Development of the Logical Method in Ancient China* (Shanghai: Oriental Book Company, 1922), 87. Also known as the *Mojing* 墨經, the dialectical chapters consist of six chapters at the end of the text. They consist of “Canons 1 and 2 [*Jingshang* 經上, *Jingxia* 經下],” “Explanations I and II [*Jingshuo shang* 經說上, *Jingshuo xia* 經說下],” “Choosing the Greater [*Daqu* 大取],” and “Choosing the Lesser [*Xiaoqu* 小取].”

reflect the way in which the concept was understood and accepted in modern China, a process that was inherently related to modern understandings of Mohist thought. This article traces changes in the translation of “utilitarianism” in modern Chinese scholarship from *shili zhuyi* 實利主義 and *leli zhuyi* 樂利主義 to *gongli zhuyi* 功利主義. The article also analyzes how the concept of utilitarianism was used and explained by modern scholars in the framework of Mohist studies.

1 A Matter of Benefit: Liang Qichao's *Shili* Utilitarianism

In an article titled “Is Mozi a Utilitarian Philosopher? The Significance of Mohist Ethical Thought in a Modern Context,” Hao Changchi 郝長擘 once expressed the hope that he could free Mohist studies from the concept of utilitarianism, to which it had been attached by the likes of Feng Youlan 馮友蘭 [1895–1990] and Li Zehou 李澤厚 [1930–2021] to give back to Mozi his true voice.⁵ Even before the work of Feng Youlan and Li Zehou, the concept of utilitarianism had permeated Mozi studies. In the form of *shili* utilitarianism and *leli* utilitarianism,⁶ utilitarian understandings of Mohist thought had been subtly influencing modern scholars since at least the beginning of the twentieth century.⁷

5 Hao Changchi 郝長擘, “Mozi shi gongli zhuyizhe ma? Lun Mozi lunli sixiang de xian-dai yiyi 墨子是功利主義者嗎? – 論墨家倫理思想的現代意義 [Is Mozi a Utilitarian Philosopher? The Significance of Mohist Ethical Thought in a Modern Context],” *Zhongguo zhexueshi* 中國哲學史, no. 1 (2005).

See also English translation Hao Changchi, “Is Mozi a Utilitarian Philosopher?” *Frontiers of Philosophy in China* 1, no. 3 (2006). – Trans.

6 Three translations of “utilitarianism” – *gongli zhuyi* 功利主義, *leli zhuyi* 樂利主義, and *shili zhuyi* 實利主義 – appear frequently throughout this article. To highlight the fact that, in this article, these terms all refer to translations of the English word “utilitarianism” (albeit expressing different understandings of it), subsequent references to these three terms, in expressing the concept of “utilitarianism,” are rendered as “*shili* utilitarianism,” “*leli* utilitarianism” and “*gongli* utilitarianism” (indicating which translation is used, not to denote a particular type of “utilitarianism”). When the term itself is referred to, the entire expression in pinyin is used (e.g., *leli zhuyi*). For greater readability, the word “utilitarianism” by itself is used in speaking of the word in English or when the general concept of utilitarianism is discussed, and differentiation is not deemed necessary.

Note that the terms *shili* utilitarianism and *leli* utilitarianism are misnomers as far as the “utility” in utilitarianism is concerned. A more literal translation of *shili zhuyi* and *leli zhuyi* is “practical-benefit-ism” and “pleasure-benefit-ism”; however, when used frequently, these translations become unwieldy, so they are not used here. – Trans.

7 Looking through the history of sinological research in both China and the West, the earliest reference connecting Mohist thought to the concept of utilitarianism is in an article written by the British sinologist Joseph Edkins [1823–1905] in January 1856. Edkins’s article in

As early as 1902, Liang Qichao 梁啟超 [1873–1929] had introduced a comprehensive set of theories related to what he called the “*leli* utilitarianism” of the English philosopher Jeremy Bentham [1748–1832]. In his article “The Doctrine of Bentham, the Master of *Leli* Utilitarianism,” Liang noted that “the Japanese translate this doctrine as the school of pleasure [*kuaile pai* 快樂派], with other translations, including the school of utility [*gongli pai* 功利派] and the school of use [*liyong pai* 利用派]. Having summarized the general principles of this doctrine in this article, I have chosen to use this translation [*leli zhuyi*] here.”⁸ This shows that the first term that Liang chose to use when translating “utilitarianism” was *leli zhuyi*.

In the article “On General Tendencies in the Development of Chinese Thought” written the same year, Liang’s discussion of Mozi and Mohist thought contained only a few references to a connection to Western learning. In one section in the article, “A Comparison between Schools of Thought in the Pre-Qin to Those in Greece and India,” Liang merely mentioned that the shortcomings of the pre-Qin schools were due to their absence of logic. Although he noted that the *Mozi*, especially two dialectical chapters, “Choosing the Greater [*Daqu* 大取]” and “Choosing the Lesser [*Xiaoqu* 小取],” contained references to terms such as “hardness” and “white horses,” which were commonly used by scholars in the school of names [or logic; *mingxue* 名學], Liang dismissed the logical arguments in the text as “never having achieved the status of an academic discipline.” Liang believed that although Mozi had a deep understanding of the principles of nature and practical learning, very few carried on his teaching, and that by the time of the Qin [221–206 BCE] and Han [206 BCE–220] dynasties, it had long since been lost to history.⁹

Yet just two years later, in 1904, Liang published “The Teachings of Mozi [*Zi Mozi xueshuo* 子墨子學說],” in *New Citizen Journal* [*Xinmin congbao* 新民

the *Journal of the North-China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* noted that “His [Mozi’s] views, while resembling Christianity in form, are much more akin in reality to the opinions of Bentham and Paley, who, had he lived in their day, would doubtless have claimed him as an ally.” See Joseph Edkins, “Notices of the Character and Writings of Meh Tsi,” *Journal of the North-China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, no. 5 (1858), 166. Edkins’s views as expressed in the article did not influence early sinological research conducted by English-language scholars and certainly had no impact on Chinese scholars’ research on Mozi.

8 Liang Qichao 梁啟超, “Leli zhuyi taidou Bianqin zhi xueshuo 樂利主義泰斗邊沁之學說 [The Doctrine of Bentham, the Master of Utilitarianism],” in *Yinbingshi heji: Zhuanji* 飲冰室合集·專集 [Collected Works from the Studio of the Iced-Water Drinker: Special Collection] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1989), 17:20.

9 Liang Qichao 梁啟超, *Lun Zhongguo xueshu sixiang bianqian zhi dashi* 論中國學術思想變遷之大勢 [On General Tendencies in the Development of Chinese Thought] (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2001), 45–46.

叢報], in which he presented a systematic study of Mohist thought. In a section titled “The *Shili* Utilitarianism of Mozi,” Liang extensively used the term *shili zhuyi* across all aspects of Mohist thought, while at the same time referring throughout the article to the main theories of Western utilitarians, such as Bentham and John Stuart Mill [1806–1873]. Based on the Chinese-language documents that I have compiled so far, this is the first instance in which Mohist thought was meaningfully related to the concept of utilitarianism.

Why did Liang’s research into Mohist thought embrace comparisons with Western philosophy in 1904, and why did he replace *leli zhuyi* with *shili zhuyi* in his explanations of Mohist thought?

Liang’s choices may have been closely connected to the publication of *The Philosophy of Yang Zhu and Mozi* [Yang Mo zhexue 楊墨哲學], by the Japanese sinologist Takase Takejirō 高瀨武次郎 [1869–1950] in 1902. Admitting that Takase’s work had influenced the research methods and structure of “The Teachings of Mozi,” Liang noted that “the order in this section was taken from Takase’s *The Philosophy of Yang Zhu and Mozi*, but the conclusions are my own. I state this explicitly, as I would not dare to appropriate the achievements of others.” Takase’s book was translated into Chinese by Jiang Weiqiao 蔣維喬 [1873–1958] in 1928. In a section of the text where Takase analyzes Mozi’s ideas about “Condemning Music [*Feiyue* 非樂],” he notes that “Mozi was a proponent of *shili* utilitarianism. His focus was on things physical and material while he rejected that which was metaphysical. This position can be seen clearly throughout the text.”¹⁰

Liang’s section on “The *Shili* Utilitarianism of Mozi” makes frequent reference to Bentham and Mill. He believed that arguments made in the chapter of the *Mozi* called “Lu’s Questions [*Lu wen* 魯問]” – which he summarized as “anything that can set my conscience at ease is considered beneficial [*li* 利]; otherwise, it must be considered as not having any benefit” – corresponded to those made in his earlier article “The Doctrine of Bentham, the Master of *Leli* Utilitarianism,” namely that Mill’s extension of Bentham’s theory framed the choice between pleasure and pain not just in terms of quantity but also in terms of quality, arguing for a distinction between higher and lower pleasures.¹¹ In addition, the sections in Liang’s article that cited Mill, Bentham, and their theories were directly related to references to *shili* utilitarianism. This suggests

10 Liang Qichao 梁啟超, “Zi Mozi xueshuo 子墨子學說 [The Teachings of Mozi],” in *Yinbingshi heji: Zhuanji*, 37:2–3.

11 See Sun Yirang 孫詒讓, *Mozi jianqu 墨子閒詁* [The Mozi with Clarifications and Corrections], coll. Sun Yikai 孫以楷 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2001), 466; Liang Qichao, “Zi Mozi xueshuo,” 29; Liang Qichao, “Leli zhuyi taidou Bianqin zhi xueshuo,” 19–20.

that Liang believed there were similarities between the *shili* utilitarianism in Mohist thought and the arguments by Mill in *Utilitarianism* and Bentham in *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*.

Looking across the entirety of Mozi's teachings on practical benefit [*shili* 實利], they generally tend to fall within the scope of that which is physical and material and are rather lacking in terms of that which is metaphysical. If [Mozi's teachings] had dealt with this [metaphysical benefit], then we could say that Mozi's concept of benefit would have been more complete.¹²

Here, the reference to the material and metaphysical in the first sentence is taken directly from *The Philosophy of Yang Zhu and Mozi*. The second sentence is Liang's reflection on *shili* utilitarianism, for, as Liang came to realize, using the term *shili zhuyi* alone did not fully explain the essence of Mohism.

Benefit [*li* 利] is not a term that Mozi avoided. Indeed, not only did he not avoid it but he also spoke of it so often that the term never seemed to leave his lips. Benefit is the guiding precept for all of Mozi's theories. Should the meaning of this term be eliminated, then the central framework upon which Mohist studies stand would collapse, and the doctrine would have no grounds on which to stand – this is a term that must be examined in detail. While it would seem that Mozi, an ardent proponent of universal love¹³ and asceticism, would be the last person to be associated with the utilitarian philosophers, when we look at the text as a whole, the fundamental ideal underpinning the text is that of benefit – this is certainly quite different.¹⁴

Whereas Liang saw the concept of benefit as the guiding precept, central framework, and fundamental ideal underpinning Mohist studies, the *shili* utilitarianism in Mohist thought could not provide “metaphysical benefits,” and this was something for which only “religious thought” could compensate. In the article's first section, “Mozi's Religious Thought,” Liang pointed out that “the reason I refer to religious thought and *shili* utilitarianism is that

12 Liang Qichao, “Zi Mozi xueshuo,” 29.

13 Although *jian'ai* 兼愛 is commonly translated as “universal love” (including in Johnston's translation), recent scholars have argued for alternative translations, including “impartial caring” and “inclusive care.” See Carine Defoort, “Are the Three ‘jian ai’ Chapters about Universal Love?” in *The Mozi as an Evolving Text: Different Voices in Early Chinese Thought*, ed. Carine Defoort and Nicolas Sandaert (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 35–68. – Trans.

14 Liang Qichao, “Zi Mozi xueshuo,” 18.

these two concepts, like the two wheels of a chariot or the two wings of a bird, are the central driving force for the entire Mohist doctrine.”¹⁵ That is, as far as Liang was concerned, in Mohist thought, the metaphysical benefits characterized by religion were in contrast to the material benefits characterized by *shili* utilitarianism.

To put it simply, morality and happiness balance each other out. This is a key characteristic of Mohist studies and puts the doctrine on the same footing as those in the West by Socrates and [Immanuel] Kant. In the Mohist doctrine, morality is found in the concept of universal love, while happiness is found in *shili* utilitarianism. These two concepts can achieve balance only as a result of Heaven’s intention [*tianzhi* 天志]. I see these three as making up the general framework of Mohist studies, with religious thought taking the central, most fundamental position.¹⁶

Although it might seem that universal love and asceticism are rather far removed from philosophical understandings of utilitarianism, Mozi’s religious thought resolved the contradictions between them. Bentham and Mill’s utilitarianism found full expression in Mohist thought only after being balanced by religious belief.

In this way, the *shili* utilitarianism of Mohism, which Liang framed as Western utilitarianism, referred to a concept of material benefits. In contrast to the metaphysical “benefits” of religion and other nonmaterial benefits, this *shili* utilitarianism existed within a framework of benefit that Mohists described in terms of “promoting the world’s benefits” [*xing tianxia zhi li* 興天下之利] and “universal mutual love and exchange of mutual benefit” [*jian xiang'ai jiao xiangli* 兼相愛交相利].

For a while after Liang Qichao’s writings, *shili zhuyi* was the Chinese catchword for the ideas of Bentham and Mill. As the term *shili* had an underlying meaning of “making practical use of,” intellectuals and democracy advocates during the Republican era began to employ *shili zhuyi* across a wide range of subject matter. In a speech at the Provisional Education Conference in 1912, Cai Yuanpei 蔡元培 [1868–1940] proclaimed that “given our current state of affairs, we must draw on other types of education, such as *shili* utilitarianism

15 Liang Qichao, “Zi Mozi xueshuo,” 8.

16 Liang Qichao, “Zi Mozi xueshuo,” 10.

and military-civilian education.”¹⁷ Cai understood *shili* utilitarian education as a synthesis of education and economics and saw it as an important means of achieving national prosperity. Only a few years later, in 1915, Chen Duxiu 陳獨秀 [1879–1942] founded the magazine that would later become *New Youth* [*Xin qingnian* 新青年, also called *La Jeunesse*] with the impassioned article “A Call to Youth,” in which he declared that “ever since Mill’s *shili* utilitarianism was taught in England and [French philosopher Auguste] Comte’s positive philosophy was taught in France, the structures of European society and the minds of its people have been transformed.”¹⁸ Three years later in an article on “*Shili* Utilitarianism and Vocational Education,” Liu Bannong 劉半農 [1891–1934] fleshed out Cai’s ideas on education and suggested that *shili* utilitarianism was “the highest form of spiritual cultivation.” Liu was also a strong advocate of the distinction between literary writing [*wenxue wen* 文學文] and practical writing [*yingyong wen* 應用文], arguing that the latter needed to be written in a style that was both practical and vernacular.¹⁹

However, by the 1920s, this wave of support for *shili* utilitarianism by Republican educators and teachers had mostly subsided. In 1922, in *A Record of Mozi and His Teaching* [*Mozi xue’an* 墨子學案], Liang Qichao once again employed the term *leli zhuyi*, which he had discarded in “The Teachings of Mozi.” However, this change may not necessarily have been driven by any personal revelations on Liang’s part. This is because over four years before Liang’s publication of *A Record of Mozi and His Teaching*, Hu Shi’s *Outline of the History of Chinese Philosophy* [*Zhongguo zhexue shi dagang* 中國哲學史大綱] – which was basically an expansion of his PhD dissertation – was already in wide circulation throughout China. In his outline, Hu Shi divided the section on Mohist thought into two chapters, “Mozi” and “Neo-Mohism [*Bie Mo* 別墨],” and it was in this second chapter that, in his hands, *leli* utilitarianism formed one of the central tenets of neo-Mohism.

17 Cai Yuanpei 蔡元培, “Duiyu xin jiaoyu zhi yijian 對於新教育之意見 [Views Regarding New Education],” in *Cai Yuanpei quanji* 蔡元培全集 [Complete Collected Works of Cai Yuanpei] (Zhejiang: Zhejiang jiaoyu chubanshe, 1997), 235.

18 Chen Duxiu 陳獨秀, “Jinggao qingnian 敬告青年 [A Call to Youth],” in *Chen Duxiu wenzhang xuanbian* 陳獨秀文章選編 [The Selected Edited Writings of Chen Duxiu] (Shanghai: Sanlian shudian, 1984), 1:77.

19 Liu Bannong 劉半農, “Shili zhuyi yu zhiye jiaoyu 實利主義與職業教育 [Utilitarianism and Vocational Education],” in *Laoshi shuole: Liu Bannong suibi* 老實說了: 劉半農隨筆 [Honestly Speaking: Informal Essays by Liu Bannong] (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2010).

2 A Humanist Approach: Hu Shi's *Leli* Utilitarianism

Hu Shi's early research in Mohist studies is primarily found in "The Development of the Logical Method in Ancient China" and *An Outline of the History of Chinese Philosophy*.²⁰ The latter was basically an extension of the former; however, it was published in China several years earlier and quickly went on to have enormous influence on the academic community at the time. "The Development of the Logical Method in Ancient China" was written in English by Hu Shi while he was a PhD student at Columbia University (1915–1917). Nearly a quarter of it consists of a section on "The Logic of Mo Di and His School," in which Hu Shi expresses quite a high opinion of Mozi: "Mo Di [was] perhaps one of the greatest souls China has ever produced."²¹

Hu Shi uses the concept of utilitarianism to analyze Mohist thought in the English-language version of "The Development of the Logical Method in Ancient China" in only two places. The first is at the end of the introduction to Mozi, in which Hu Shi outlines the development and decline of neo-Mohism: "The growth of the school, however, appears to have been arrested toward the last half of the third century BC. At the end of that century, Mohism with all the schools disappeared entirely." Hu Shi believed that Mohism may have disappeared for the following reasons. First, "its doctrines of universal love and anti-militarism were incompatible with the needs of the age." Hu Shi then quotes the *Guanzi* 管子 to show evidence of this point. Second, Hu Shi writes, "nor was this age of warfare propitious to scientific research and philosophical speculation." This point is supported with a quote from the *Han Fei zi* 韓非子. Hu Shi then concludes: "thus the utilitarian basis on which Mohism was founded came back to itself as a boomerang and caused its own downfall."²² The second place in which Hu Shi used the term was in relation to the second law of Mozi's Three Laws of Reasoning: "facts of the ears and eyes of the people." Hu Shi references this law with a footnote quoting Mill's *Utilitarianism*.

"The Development of the Logical Method in Ancient China" was not translated into Chinese until 1982, when the History of Chinese Logic Research Council [*Zhongguo luojishi yanjiuhui* 中國邏輯史研究會] arranged it. That is, Hu Shi himself did not translate "utilitarianism" into *gongli zhuyi*, nor did he

20 Published in 1918, the first volume of *An Outline of the History of Chinese Philosophy* was merged with *The Development of the Logical Method in Ancient China* [*Xianqin mingxue shi* 先秦名學史] and edited by Hu Shi to become *A History of Ancient Chinese Philosophy*. See Hu Shi 胡適, "Zhongguo gudai zhexue shi 中國古代哲學史 [A History of Ancient Chinese Philosophy]," in *Hu Shi quanji* 胡適全集 [*The Complete Works of Hu Shi*], vol. 5 (Hefei: Anhui chubanshe, 2003).

21 Hu Shih, "The Development of the Logical Method in Ancient China," 60.

22 Hu Shih, "The Development of the Logical Method in Ancient China," 61–62.

devote many lines to the idea of utilitarianism, as his key research focus throughout the text was logical thought. This means that to probe Hu Shi's choice of translation of "utilitarianism" more deeply and to understand his research methods in greater detail, we need to turn our focus to his Chinese-language writings on the subject in *An Outline of the History of Chinese Philosophy*.²³

Originally published in Chinese in 1918, *An Outline of the History of Chinese Philosophy* divides Mozi and neo-Mohism into two separate sections. Hu Shi believed that these two schools reflected the thinking of the early and later stages of Mohism.

In his section on neo-Mohism, Hu Shi used the term *leli zhuyi* to describe the key characteristics of later Mohist thought, which he identified as "new *leli* utilitarianism." "Although Mozi presented the idea that 'righteousness [*yi* 義] was the same as being of benefit,' he never went into this idea in detail. It wasn't until the neo-Mohists that we get a complete '*leli* utilitarianism.'"²⁴

Hu Shi quoted from the dialectical chapter "Canons I [*Jing shang* 經上]" as evidence for his argument: "Righteousness is being of benefit. Benefit is what one is pleased to get. Harm is what one is displeased to get."²⁵

Hu Shi believed that neo-Mohist philosophy was not one of vested self-interest or self-serving benefit but, rather, one of "*leli* utilitarianism for the entire world."

In terms of harm, it is to choose the lesser [harm]. In terms of harm, choosing the lesser is not to choose harm, but to choose benefit. What is chosen is controlled by others. In meeting a robber, to cut off a finger to spare the [whole] body is a benefit. Meeting a robber is the harm. Cutting off a finger and cutting off a hand are alike in terms of benefit to the world; there is no choosing.²⁶

"The thinking of the neo-Mohist school corresponds with the philosophy of Bentham and Mill."²⁷ Here, Hu Shi's assessment demonstrates a connection between *leli* utilitarianism and utilitarianism.

23 Hu Shi, "The Development of the Logical Method in Ancient China," 57; Hu Shi 胡適, "Xian Qin mingxue shi 先秦名學史 [The Development of the Logical Method in Ancient China]," in *Hu Shi quanji*, 64–93.

24 Hu Shi 胡適, *Zhongguo zhexue shi dagang* 中國哲學史大綱 [*An Outline of the History of Chinese Philosophy*] (Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan, 2011), 291.

25 Sun Yirang, *Mozi jiangou*, 314; translation taken from Ian Johnston, *The Mozi: A Complete Translation*, 381, 395, 397.

26 Sun Yirang, *Mozi jiangou*, 404. Translation taken from Johnston, *The Mozi*, 581. – Trans.

27 Hu Shi, *Zhongguo zhexue shi dagang*, 292.

Following a trajectory similar to that of Liang Qichao, Hu Shi was the second Chinese scholar to carry out in-depth research into the connection between Mohism's understanding of benefit and the philosophies of Bentham and Mill. Although Liang first used the term *leli zhuyi*, he saw the ten doctrines²⁸ of Mohism only in terms of "practical benefit" and used religious thought as a way of extending this into the metaphysical domain. In contrast, Hu Shi took the Mohist school's *leli* utilitarianism and expanded its application to the dialectical chapters of the neo-Mohists. Therefore, he could see what Liang could not: the possibility that Mohism could transcend the "practical benefit" of the material world and meet psychological needs.

Whereas Liang Qichao sought a *shili* utilitarianism within the Mohist doctrines that emphasized the material and the physical, Hu Shi's use of *le* 樂 [pleasure, joy] as opposed to *shi* 實 [practical, real] shows that the benefit as found in the dialectical chapters could be matched with a humanist [*ren* 人] framework. Hu Shi's interpretation emphasized a more human-centered approach, in which the benefit to be obtained was not just a practical benefit but also one that could satisfy internal human needs, which would allow those who receive it to feel both pleasure and joy.

Hu Shi's use of *leli zhuyi* was not limited to his research on Mohist thought. Greatly influenced by the pragmatism of his teacher and mentor John Dewey [1859–1952], Hu Shi saw *leli* utilitarianism as a key characteristic of pragmatic Confucianism. From Hu Shi's point of view, the detailed investigations into usefulness and utility carried out by Li Gou 李觚 [1009–1059] and Wang Anshi 王安石 [1021–1086] in the Northern Song [960–1127] and by Chen Liang 陳亮 [1143–1194] and Ye Shi 葉適 [1150–1223] in the Southern Song [1127–1279] meant that they could all be seen as proponents of *leli* utilitarianism. Hu Shi saw this group as the forerunners of the school of thought in the late Ming [1368–1644] and early Qing dynasties advocating that learning be of practical use to society [*jingshi zhiyong* 經世致用].²⁹

Thus it would seem that, when presented with *shili* utilitarianism, which emphasized physical and material needs, Hu Shi and Liang Qichao both used *leli zhuyi* as their ultimate translation for the utilitarianism of Bentham and

28 The "ten doctrines" here refer to the ten fundamental doctrines of Mohist thought. These are, in order of chapter sequence, "Exalting Worthiness [*Shangxian* 尚賢]," "Exalting Unity [*Shangtong* 尚同]," "Universal Love [*Jian'ai* 兼愛]," "Condemning Offensive Warfare [*Feigong* 非攻]," "Moderation in Use [*Jieyong* 節用]," "Moderation in Funerals [*Jiezang* 節葬]," "Heaven's Intention [*Tianzhi* 天志]," "Perceptive Ghosts [*Minggui* 明鬼]," "Condemning Music [*Feiyue* 非樂]," and "Against Fate [*Feiming* 非命]."

29 Hu Shi 胡適, "Dai Dongyuan de zhixue 戴東原的哲學 [The Philosophical Thought of Dai Zhen]," in *Hu Shi wenji* 胡適文集 [*Collected Works of Hu Shi*] (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1998), 7:43–46.

Mill. Given this, it is pertinent to ask about the origins of the term *gongli zhuyi*. How did it become the generally accepted translation of “utilitarianism”?

3 The Rise and Triumph of *Gongli Zhuyi*

3.1 *Differences in the Chinese and Western Understanding of Gongli and “Utility”*

Any in-depth analysis of the connection between Mohist thought and utilitarianism needs to be preceded by an investigation into the meaning of the term *gongli*. In English, the root of the word “utilitarianism” is “utility,” which means “practical use,” “usefulness,” and “public utility.” Following the philosophy of his teacher and mentor Jeremy Bentham, Mill further developed the meaning of “utilitarianism” as the idea of the greatest happiness and benefits for the greatest number. This allowed individuals to maximize their own benefits, while also allowing for overall benefit to be realized by groups of individuals, such as society and the international community.³⁰

However, in Chinese, the term *gongli* has vastly different connotations. Bound together with the constraints of a Confucian paradigm that values righteousness over benefit, *gongli* could never escape the connotations of official rank, personal wealth, and short-term profit. This can be seen not only in instances where *gongli* appears in classical texts, such as the *Zhuangzi* 莊子³¹ and the *Xunzi* 荀子,³² but even in the works of some of the most “utilitarian”

30 John Stuart Mill 约翰·穆勒, *Gongli zhuyi* 功利主義 [*Utilitarianism*], trans. Xu Dajian 徐大建 (Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan, 2014), 14.

31 In his chapter “Heaven and Earth [*Tian di* 天地],” *Zhuangzi* recounts a story of the meeting between Confucius’ disciple Zi Gong 子貢 [520–446 BCE] and a gardener. Upon seeing the gardener struggle to draw water from a well, Zi Gong pointed out that there were machines that could make his work much simpler. The gardener rejected this, stating that “where there are ingenious contrivances, there are sure to be subtle doings; and that where there are subtle doings, there is sure to be a scheming mind.... I do not know [the contrivance that you mention], but I should be ashamed to use it.” Zi Gong was taken aback by the words of the gardener and mulled over them for an entire day. When one of his followers asked about the matter, Zi Gong described how this meeting had allowed him to see that the way of the sage was actually one of simplicity. “[Such men] live in the world in closest union with the people.... Vast and complete is their simplicity! Success [*gong* 功], gain [*li* 利], and ingenious contrivances, and artful cleverness, indicate [in their opinion] a forgetfulness of the [proper] mind of man.” Translation taken from James Legge, *The Texts of Taoism* (New York: Dover, 1962), 1:319–21.

32 During a debate on military principles between Xunzi 荀子 [ca. 313–238 BCE] and the lord of Linwu 臨武君 before King Xiaocheng of Zhao 趙孝成王 [d. 245 BCE], the king asked Xunzi how a true king should go about employing soldiers. Xunzi then gave examples of the ways in which soldiers are employed in different states. These included

thinkers in the Southern Song, Chen Liang³³ and Ye Shi.³⁴ The term's negative connotations have remained; telling people that they are “very *gongli*” still carries strongly pejorative overtones, suggesting that they are profit seeking and focused solely on achieving personal ambitions. In terms of the Chinese translation of culturally loaded terms, *gongli* is probably not the most appropriate Chinese translation of the “utility” in utilitarianism. Notwithstanding the positive meanings of “utility” due to the modern Enlightenment's reverence for individual equality and freedom, *gongli* would never have been used as a translation by democracy advocates to promote utilitarianism as a positive philosophical notion.

rewarding soldiers who come back with the head of an enemy (as used in the state of Qi 齊), using tests of physical ability (as used in the state of Wei 魏), and using a system of punishments and rewards where “rewards increase to keep pace with achievements” (as used in the state of Qin 秦). Xunzi then goes on to say that all these strategies are inferior to achieving unity among soldiers through the benevolence and righteousness of the king. “Therefore, to attract men to military service and recruit soldiers as they do, to rely upon force and deception and teach men to covet military achievements and profit – this is the way to deceive people. But to rely upon ritual principles and moral education – this is a way to unite them.” Translation taken from Burton Watson, *Xunzi: Basic Writings* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 59–66.

- 33 During a debate between Zhu Xi 朱熹 [1130–1200] and Chen Liang on *li* and *yi* in connection with their understandings of a true king [*wang* 王] and a hegemon [*ba* 霸], Chen Liang drew from examples in canonical texts to highlight the importance of *gongli*, a term that Zhu Xi and his followers saw as negative and refused to accept as necessary. Chen Liang stated, “If Yu the Great had no achievements, how did he order the six treasuries? If Qian 乾 had no accomplishments, how did it possess the four virtues?” Here, Chen is referencing the *Book of Documents* [*Shangshu* 尚書] with the “six treasuries” referring to the five elements (metal, wood, water, fire, earth) and grain. The second example is from the *Yijing* 易經 [*Book of Changes*] and a reference to the first lines of the Qian hexagram. The four virtues refer to *yuan* 元 [supreme], *heng* 亨 [fortune], *li* 利 [profitable] and *zhen* 貞 [augury]. See Huang Zongxi 黃宗羲, *Song Yuan xue'an: Longchuan xue'an* 宋元學案: 龍川學案 [*Records of Song and Yuan Scholars: Record of Chen Liang*] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1986), 13. – Trans.
- 34 Writing in the Southern Song, Ye Shi, one of the leaders of the more practically oriented Yongjia School of Thought [*Yongjia xuepai* 永嘉學派], argued that although Dong Zhongshu's 董仲舒 [179–104 BCE] philosophy of “pursuing righteousness and not benefit, and promoting the *dao* and not seeking achievements” may initially seem justified, careful analysis revealed it to be quite superficial. Ye Shi believed that the ancients brought benefit to others and did not draw attention to their achievements [*gong*] and thus promoted the *dao* and righteousness. Attacking later Confucian scholars who had followed in the footsteps of Dong Zhongshu, Ye Shi observed, “If one has no achievements [*gong*] or profits [*li*], then the *dao* and righteousness are nothing but useless empty words.” Ye Shi 葉適, *Xixue jiyuan xumu* 習學記言序目 [*Study Notes on Classics and Histories*] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1977), 324. – Trans.

As early as 1903, Yan Fu 嚴復 [1854–1921] used *gongli zhuyi* in his translation of Mill's *On Liberty*; however, the translated English term was not in fact “utilitarianism.”³⁵ Yan Fu's translation of the only occurrence of “utilitarianism” in *On Liberty*, “the judicious utilitarianism of Aristotle,” was rendered as *quanheng shendang, guangbei minsheng* 權衡審當，廣被民生 [balancing the comprehensive and appropriate, encompassing the livelihoods of the people].³⁶ It is noteworthy that Yan Fu's translation of Thomas Huxley's [1825–1895] *Evolution and Ethics* in 1897 contained a comment on the difference between the Chinese concept of *gongli* and the Western idea of “utility”:

Most ancient doctrines in both the East and the West pitted *gongli* against virtue so that they were diametrically opposed like fragrant herbs and foul herbs. Yet today, laws of biology are raised to show that one cannot survive unless one seeks personal gain. However, once we develop the intelligence of citizens, then they will know that without promoting the *dao* there can be no achievements, and that without pursuing righteousness there can be no benefit. What ill is there in *gongli*? It is a matter of how it is achieved. Thus, the West calls this the enlightened seeking of personal gain. This enlightened pursuit of personal gain is not antithetical to virtue.³⁷

Yan Fu's comment on the relationship between *gongli* and virtue was a continuation of the ideas of Chen Liang and Ye Shi in the Southern Song and show that he acknowledged the legitimacy of Western concepts such as “the enlightened seeking of personal gain” and “utility.” In inquiring “what ill is there in

35 Yan Fu's use of *gongli zhuyi* occurs in the translation of the following passage from *On Liberty*: “let not society pretend that it needs, besides all this, the power to issue commands and enforce obedience in the personal concerns of individuals, in which, on all principles of justice and policy, the decision ought to rest with those who are to abide by the consequences (John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, ed. David Bromwich and George Ketab [London: Yale University Press, 2003], 146).” Yan Fu's Chinese translation: “謂社會必挾其多數之力，製為法律功令，取人人小己所自將者，而號令劫持之，曰必舍汝所欲而從我，此不徒于公理為不倫，即以功利主義言之，亦未見其有益也。” (John Stuart Mill 密爾, *Qunji quanjie lun* 群己權界論 [*On the Boundary between the Rights of the Individual and Society (On Liberty)*], trans. Yan Fu 嚴復 [Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1981], 89) It is interesting to note that Yan Fu's use of *gongli zhuyi* here does not seem to be directly connected to any word in the English original (though if one had to be chosen it would be “policy”).

36 Mill, *Qunji quanjie lun*, 26.

37 Yan Fu 嚴復, trans., “Tianyan lun 天演論 [Evolution and Ethics],” in *Yan Fu ji* 嚴復集 [*Collected Works of Yan Fu*] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1986), 5:395.

gongli?" Yan Fu was rejecting the negative connotations of selfishness and individualism that had enveloped the concept of *gongli* for thousands of years.

Not long after Yan Fu's translation, Wu Yu, one of the New Culture movement's fiercest critics of Confucius, also saw a connection between utilitarianism and Mohist thought and exploited this connection to break down fixed ideas in Confucian discourse. Unlike Liang Qichao and Hu Shi, Wu Yu was not an expert in Mohist studies, yet his fervent passion for attacking Confucius and Confucianism, to which he devoted his entire life, led Hu Shi to commend him as "a battle-hardened warrior who singlehandedly fought against the house of Confucius" and "the dustman who came to clear out China's philosophical trash."³⁸ Having spent time studying in Japan, Wu Yu was an ardent follower of Western learning and was extremely active in promoting Western concepts of democracy and freedom in China.

Wu Yu's approach to attacking Confucianism was to find alternative Chinese schools of thought that could be used as weapons to fight on behalf of Western learning. Given Mozi's open attacks on Confucianism as well as Mencius's criticism that Mohist thought espoused "universal love without acknowledging the particular affection due to one's parents," Mohist thought was Wu Yu's perfect weapon of choice. Wu Yu believed that, of the nine major pre-Qin schools of thought, only Mohist thought could take the fight to Confucianism, which was further evidenced by more than one hundred lines of textual arguments between Confucius and Mozi and between Confucianism and Mohism. Noting that the philosophies of Yang Zhu 楊朱 [395–335 BCE] and Mozi were both "not only popular in their time, but also contained many coincidental connections with Western philosophical doctrines,"³⁹ Wu Yu went on to match up Western doctrines and their representatives with the key tenets adopted by Mozi and Yang Zhu. Examples of the connections made with Mohist thought include the following:

Mozi's universal love was like Jesus' love for all; his teachings on recipient ghosts [*mingui* 明鬼] were akin to Socrates' belief in the spirits; his moderation in use [*jieyong* 節用] was similar to the asceticism of Antisthenes; his cultivation of the self [*xiushen* 修身] resembled Plato's synthesis of intellect and virtue; his chapters on "Choosing the Greater" and "Choosing the Lesser" comparable to Mill's *System of Logic*; his doctrine of condemning offensive warfare [*feigong* 非攻] much the same

38 Hu Shi 胡適, "Wu Yu wenlu 吳虞文錄 [An Account of Wu Yu]," in *Hu Shi wenji*, 2:608–10.

39 Wu Yu 吳虞, "Bian Mengzi pi Yang Mo zhi fei 辨孟子辟楊墨之非 [Analyzing Mencius's Attacks on Yang Zhu and Mozi]," in *Xinhai geming qian shinianjian shilun xuanji*, 3:739.

as the Russian emperor's mission for peace; and his essential idea that "benefit is good" comparable to the utilitarianism of Abraham Tucker.⁴⁰

Wu Yu mocked Mencius for only seeing benefit as selfish and personal and for being unable to see the wider utilitarian understandings of the term.

Yang Zhu's doctrine of benefiting the self was unarguably inferior to that of utilitarianism. Yet when King Hui asked Mencius how he would benefit his state, he was referring to a utilitarian benefit. Mencius did not know this and misunderstood the benefit as pertaining to benefiting the self, thus his answer was wide of the mark.⁴¹

Carine Defoort notes that "Wang Chong, for instance, criticized Mencius for being consciously confusing in his rebuke of the king of Wei." As Wang Chong 王充 [27–100] states, "Now, there are two kinds of *li*: there is material *li* and there is the *li* of well-being. When King Hui asked: 'How to *li* my state?' how did Mencius know that the king did not mean the *li* of well-being? But Mencius went ahead, taking exception to material *li*."⁴² That is to say, Defoort and Wu Yu both disagree with Mencius's criticisms of Mozi's utilitarian thinking.

Wu Yu's comparison of *gongli* utilitarianism with Mozi's concept that "benefit is good" was the result of modern Chinese scholars re-examining the meaning of *gongli* under the influence of modern Western thought, following the work of Yan Fu. By the eve of the New Culture movement, *gongli* utilitarianism had become the border between traditional morality and a new emerging morality in Republican China. Some scholars even took the view that the entire New Culture movement could be seen as an intellectual Enlightenment based on the central idea of *gongli* utilitarianism.⁴³

Chen Duxiu vehemently opposed Mencius's distinction between righteousness and profit and believed that morality and material interests should be

40 Wu Yu, "Bian Mengzi pi Yang Mo zhi fei," 3:739.

41 Wu Yu, "Bian Mengzi pi Yang Mo zhi fei," 3:739.

42 Carine Defoort, "The Profit That Does Not Profit: Paradoxes with 'Li' in Early Chinese Texts," *Asia Major* 21, no. 1 (2008): 170.

43 Lin Yusheng 林毓生 noted that, during the May Fourth period, the drive to study Western learning was driven by utilitarian motives, whereas Liu Shipei 劉師培 [1884–1919], writing for his monthly journal *National Heritage* [*Guogu* 國故] in 1919, criticized the New Culture movement for promoting utility and science while dismissing propriety and cultural mores. See Lin Yusheng 林毓生, *Sixiang yu renwu* 思想與人物 [*Ideas and People*] (Taipei: Lianjing chuban youxian gongsi, 1983); Lin Heng 林衡, *Shiji jueze: Zhongguo mingyun dalunzhan* 世紀抉擇：中國命運大論戰 [*The Choices of the Century: The Fight for the Fate of China*], vol. 3 (Beijing: Shishi chubanshe, 1997).

pursued together. In “Further Questions Addressed to the Correspondents of the *Eastern Miscellany*” in 1919, he noted that “utilitarianism’s stance on rights, namely the greatest happiness for the greatest number, was a key condition for citizens’ rights and freedom, as well as for a constitutional republic.”⁴⁴

During the New Culture movement, Qian Xuantong 錢玄同 [1887–1939], an ardent supporter of the abolition of Chinese characters, proclaimed that he had always been a utilitarian. In the “Biography of Qian Xuantong,” written after Qian’s death in 1939, his friend Li Jinxi 黎錦熙 [1890–1978] stated with a heavy heart and great tenacity of spirit that “Qian Xuantong found his life’s calling in Mozi’s utilitarianism, the greatest happiness for the greatest number.”⁴⁵ Qian Xuantong’s unbounded veneration for Mohist thought and utilitarianism had led to the merging of these two concepts within Li Jinxi’s framework of values.

Following modern scholars’ opposition to and dissatisfaction with China’s “old morals,” as personified in Confucius and Mencius, *gongli* broke free of the negative Confucian framework to which it had been bound and was infused with positive connotations. At the same time, *gongli zhuyi* began to replace *shili zhuyi* and *leli zhuyi* and soon became the undisputed Chinese translation for “utilitarianism.” As with earlier changes in the translation of “utilitarianism,” the final stages of this process once again were completed after a reanalysis of Mohist thought, which in this case was driven primarily by Feng Youlan.

3.2 *Feng Youlan’s Gongli Utilitarianism*

Not long after arriving at Columbia University in 1921, Feng Youlan delivered a lecture in English on “Chinese Philosophy” titled “Why China Has No Science: An Interpretation of the History and Consequences of Chinese Philosophy,” in which he asserted that Mozi was the second-most-important thinker in pre-Qin China after Confucius. In his remarks on the essence of Mohist thought, Feng stated that “the fundamental idea of Mohism is utility. The sanction of virtue is not that it is natural, but that it is useful.” Feng then cited the line from the “Canons I” chapter in the *Mozi* as textual evidence for his position, “righteousness is being of benefit, benefit is what one is pleased to get.” By this

44 Chen Duxiu 陳獨秀, “Zai zhiwen *Dongfang zazhi* jizhe 再質問‘東方雜誌’記者 [Further Questions Addressed to the Correspondents of the *Eastern Miscellany*],” in *Chen Duxiu wenzhang xuanbian*, 1:347.

45 Li Jinxi 黎錦熙, “Qian Xuantong xiansheng zhuan 錢玄同先生傳 [Biography of Qian Xuantong],” in *Jingshi zhanshi tekan* 經世戰時特刊 [*Statecraft Wartime Special Issue*], 47–48 (1939): 10.

time, Feng's studies of Mohist thought were already fixed on a course that saw "Mozi's position in ethics [as] essentially that of utilitarianism."⁴⁶

Feng completed his PhD dissertation, "A Comparative Study of Life Ideals" (in English) in 1924, and it was published in English by the Commercial Press in Shanghai the following year. In the chapter titled "Utilitarianism: Mozi," Feng directly summed up Mohist thought as utilitarian:

To represent this type we have chosen Mozi's philosophy, which we consider as the most systematic utilitarianism of ancient times.... As we shall see, Mozi not only gave us an abstract principle of utility, but a complete structure of society, state and religion that was built upon that principle.... We hope Mozi may be a good illustration of both the excellence and defects of utilitarianism.⁴⁷

Then, Feng examined Mozi's writings from a social, political, and religious perspective and outlined how Mohist thought was established on a utilitarian basis. He compared Mohist thought to the hedonism of Yang Zhu and systematically differentiated a hedonism that "benefits the self" and a utilitarianism that "benefits others."⁴⁸ At the same time, Feng quoted several passages in Bentham's *An Introduction to the Principle of Morals and Legislation* to show parallels with Mohist thought. One example is the following:

Bentham said: Nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters, *pain* and *pleasure*.... The *principle of utility* recognizes this subjection, and assumes it for the foundation of that system.... We shall see that this is exactly what Mozi did. In his work, however, he did not speak so much of pleasure and pain, as of their objective counterparts, benefit and harm.⁴⁹

Feng's research on the Mohist ideas of universal love, exalting unity, exalting worthiness [*shangxian* 尚賢], and moderation in use were all carried out within a framework that saw utilitarianism as the basis of Mohist thought. In a section called "What Is the Greatest Benefit of the People?" Feng argued that

46 Fung Yu-lan, "Why China Has No Science: An Interpretation of the History and Consequences of Chinese Philosophy," *International Journal of Ethics* 32, no. 3 (1922): 245.

47 Fung Yu-lan, *A Comparative Study of Life Ideals* (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1925), 243–50.

48 Fung Yu-lan, *A Comparative Study of Life Ideals*, 243–50.

49 Fung Yu-lan, *A Comparative Study of Life Ideals*, 248; Jeremy Bentham, *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (Kitchener, UK: Batoche Books, 2000), 14.

ideas concerning moderation in use show examples of the utilitarian calculations made by the Mohists. “Identifying the increase of wealth and population with the greatest benefit to the country and the people, Mozi went on to fight against anything that had no direct utility to it. In the first place he was against any kind of luxury.”⁵⁰ At the end of this chapter, Feng outlined the defects of Mohist utilitarianism: “But that we should sacrifice every kind of immediate enjoyment for that end only is certainly too utilitarian a theory. I say it is too utilitarian, because it pays too much attention to the future.”⁵¹

At the conclusion of his chapter on Mozi, Feng cites Xunzi’s [ca. 313–238 BCE] critique of Mozi – that he was “blinded by utility and did not know refinement” – as well as a passage from *Shuo Yuan* 說苑 by Liu Xiang 劉向 [ca. 77–ca. 6 BCE], recounting a dialogue between Mozi and his disciple Qin Guli 禽滑釐, in which Mozi notes that “the procedure of the sages is to have material goods first, then refinement.” Feng uses these quotations to illustrate that the Mohists did not neglect “refinement” [wen 文] but, rather, that as utilitarians, they believed that there could be no refinement without utility. Feng presented the reasons for the development of this kind of thinking at the end of the chapter, “Mozi seemed to have in his mind the presupposition that the natural environment of man is so fixed that what man can do is after all but very little. So the best policy for preserving his race is hard work and economy.”⁵²

This shows that Feng’s utilitarianism had both the “practical benefit” of hard work and economy and the “pleasurable benefit” [*leli*] of having first material goods and then refinement. In Feng’s reading, the Mohists promoted integration of the individual’s material and spiritual pursuits and revealed the Mohist idea of seeking benefit for the state, society, and the world.

Feng’s first official use of *gongli zhuyi* in relation to Mohist studies was in the 1926 publication of *Philosophy of Life*. Essentially a Chinese translation of his PhD dissertation, *Philosophy of Life* continued Liang Qichao’s appraisal of Mohism as utilitarian and used *gongli zhuyi* as the Chinese translation of “utilitarianism.”⁵³

Following an approach similar to that of Hu Shi, Feng’s first volume of *A History of Chinese Philosophy*, published in 1931, divided Mohist thought into two chapters, “Mozi and the Early Mohists” and “The Dialectical Chapters and

50 See Feng Youlan 馮友蘭, *Rensheng zhexue* 人生哲學 [*Philosophy of Life*] (Guilin: Guangxi shifan daxue chubanshe, 2005), 71.

51 Feng Youlan, *Rensheng zhexue*, 84.

52 Fung Yu-lan, *A Comparative Study of Life Ideals*, 249, 255, 130; See Feng Youlan, *Rensheng zhexue*, 71, 78.

53 Feng Youlan, *Rensheng zhexue*, 67.

the Later Mohists.” In the first of these chapters, Feng presented Mozi as an extreme utilitarian, whereas in the second – which included a section on “The Utilitarianism in the Dialectical Chapters” – he revealed how the utilitarian nature of Mohist thought gradually changed. Quoting many passages in the dialectical chapters, Feng argued that the extreme utilitarianism of the early Mohists had matured by the time of the later Mohists to emphasize a utilitarianism that went beyond material benefit: “The doctrine of utilitarianism forms the basis of Mozi’s philosophy, but though Mozi himself stressed utility, he failed to explain *why* we should thus value it. The ‘Mohist Canons’ go one step further and supply utilitarianism with a psychological basis.”⁵⁴

Feng’s utilitarian understanding of Mohism continued unchanged, as seen in the section “Yang Zhu and Mozi [*Yang Mo* 楊墨]” in “A New Treatise on the Nature of Dao [*Xin yuan Dao* 新原道],” published in 1945: “Utilitarianism formed the basis of all the theories promoted by the Mohist school.... The Mohist theories on the origins of the state and society were also utilitarian in their nature.”⁵⁵

In his explication of Mohist understanding of *li* in *A Comparative Study of Life Ideals*, Feng built on the work on the *shili* utilitarianism and *leli* utilitarianism in Mohist thought by Liang Qichao and Hu Shi, while also following the *gongli* utilitarian turn that emerged in China around the time of the New Culture movement. As far as Feng was concerned, the term *gongli* was no longer bound to the negative connotations of Confucian discourse and was, instead, a reflection of the legitimate value and effects of *li* – with success measured in the achievement of a shared profit that satisfied the material and psychological needs of the greatest number. This understanding corresponded with Yan Fu’s “enlightened pursuit of personal gain” and the Western “utility” of Wu Yu’s “benefit is good.” So, under Feng’s hand, *gongli zhuyi* gained increasingly widespread acceptance.

3.3 The Final Triumph of Gongli Utilitarianism

In the decade after Feng Youlan’s publication of *Philosophy of Life*, several notable works on Chinese philosophy that all drew heavily on Feng’s *Philosophy of Life* and *A History of Chinese Philosophy* hit the shelves, including *Outline of the Political and Social Ideas of Pre-Qin Thinkers*, by Ji Wenfu 嵇文甫 [1895–1963];

54 Fung Yu-lan, *A History of Chinese Philosophy*, trans. Derk Bodde (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1952), 1:248. The term “Mohist canons” refers to the dialectical chapters of the *Mozi*. – Trans.

55 Feng Youlan 馮友蘭, “Xin yuan Dao 新原道 [A New Treatise on the Nature of Dao],” in *Sansongtang quanji* 三松堂全集 [*The Complete Works of Feng Youlan*] (Zhengzhou: Henan renmin chubanshe, 2000), 5:31.

History of Ancient Chinese Philosophy, by Chen Yuande 陳元德 [fl. 1937]; and *Laozi and Mozi's Philosophical Outlook on Life*, by Cai Shangsi 蔡尚思 [1905–2008]. Although none of these scholars examined Mohist thought in detail – most presented Mohism in terms of broad generalizations⁵⁶ – they all used the term *gongli zhuyi* in their analysis of Mohism. This shows that, in just a decade, Feng's use of *gongli zhuyi* in researching and analyzing Mohist thought had set a new trend in Mohist studies that was accepted by the wider academic community. Feng's influence in the field can be gauged by the number of scholars who followed his approach and employed *gongli zhuyi* in their research.

Yan Lingfeng 嚴靈峰 [1904–1980] was one such scholar, with the publication in 1958 of *A Mozi Compendium*, which presented the most detailed analysis of Mohism's utilitarian philosophy since Feng Youlan.

Yan saw the unshakeable position of *gongli* utilitarianism in Mohist thought as extremely important. Yan's analysis, in contrast to that of Feng Youlan, did not draw on the work of Bentham and Mill and, instead, presented a close reading of the *Mozi* in which he examined the meaning of *li* in the ten doctrines. According to Yan, Mohist *gongli* utilitarianism was an important factor in each of them. Citing the chapter "All under Heaven [*Tianxia* 天下]" in the *Zhuangzi*, in which Mozi is criticized for taking his ideas on moderation in the use and condemnation of music too far, Yan concurred with Zhuangzi's critique and argued that the *gongli* utilitarianism of the Mohist school, seen in its attacks on the "ceremonies and music of the ancients," was a case of overcorrection.⁵⁷

In contrast to Yang, Feng Youlan dramatically changed his position on Mohism's *gongli* utilitarianism in the 1960s. In the *New Edition of a History of Chinese Philosophy*, published in 1962, Feng discarded most of his arguments on the utilitarian philosophy of Mohism and, instead, made greater use of terms commonly found in Chinese Marxism: materialism and idealism.⁵⁸

56 Chen Yuande 陳元德, *Zhongguo gudai zhexueshi* 中國古代哲學史 [*History of Ancient Chinese Philosophy*] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1937); Cai Shangsi 蔡尚思, "Lao Mo zhexue zhi renshengguan 老墨哲學之人生觀 [Laozi and Mozi's Philosophical Outlook on Life]," in *Cai Shangsi quanji* 蔡尚思全集 [*The Complete Works of Cai Shangsi*] (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2005); Ji Wenfu 嵇文甫, *Xian-Qin zhuzi zhengzhi shehui sixiang shuyao* 先秦諸子政治社會思想述要 [*Outline of the Political and Social Ideas of Pre-Qin Thinkers*] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1930).

57 Yan Lingfeng 嚴靈峰, *Mozi jianbian* 墨子簡編 [*A Mozi Compendium*] (Taipei: Shangwu chubanshe, 1968), 91; James Legge, *The Texts of Taoism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1891), 2:218.

58 After the founding of the People's Republic of China [1949], Feng Youlan's interpretation of the Mohist school's utilitarianism underwent significant change. In his new edition of *A History of Chinese Philosophy*, Feng stated: "Mohist thought developed on a path

Changes in scholars' understanding of Mohist thought were intimately connected with their attempt to navigate the social mores and political environment of their time. Yet, although interpretations of Mohist utilitarianism may have shifted in modern Mohist studies, *gongli zhuyi* – following the work of Feng Youlan – has become the sole Chinese translation of “utilitarianism” in studies on Mohist thought and, more generally, on Chinese philosophy and culture. *Shili* utilitarianism and *leli* utilitarianism are now historical footnotes, though perhaps these historical translations can be used by modern scholars to re-evaluate the work of Liang Qichao and Hu Shi.⁵⁹

4 Conclusion

Because of the transmission of Western learning during the late Qing dynasty and early years of the Republic, utilitarianism became the main concept through which Mohist thought was interpreted. This was led by the *shili* utilitarianism and *leli* utilitarianism of Hu Shi and Liang Qichao, followed by Wu Yu's efforts to free *gongli* from the negative connotations it held in Confucian discourse and his use of *gongli* utilitarianism in Mohist studies. Feng Youlan's positioning of *gongli* utilitarianism as a central concept in Mohist thought and his deep analysis of the term helped to cement *gongli zhuyi* as the sole Chinese translation of “utilitarianism” in Chinese cultural studies. This process led to the formation of a close connection between Mohist thought and utilitarianism, reconstructing Mohist studies through the framework of Western learning. At the same time, scholars and advocates of democracy, such as Wu Yu, Feng Youlan, and Qian Xuantong, took advantage of these changes in Mohist studies to call for *gongli* to be understood not as a synonym for being selfish and self-seeking but as a term for promoting individual equality and inner happiness and as a democratic idea that could help to gradually achieve the greatest happiness and prosperity for all. Modern scholars' appropriation of Western

towards materialism. The Latter Mohist school rejected the idealist elements in Mohist thought and further developed aspects related to materialism and science. In doing so, they helped Mohist thought to become a relatively complete system of materialism.” See Feng Youlan 馮友蘭, “*Zhongguo zhexueshi xinbian shigao* 中國哲學史新編試稿 [New Edition of a *History of Chinese Philosophy* Trial Version],” in *Sansongtang quanji*, 7:6, 163.

59 Kawajiri Fumihiko 川尻文彦, “Ziyou' yu 'gongli' – Yi Liang Qichao de 'gongli zhuyi' wei zhongxin ‘自由’與‘功利’ – 以梁啟超的‘功利主義’為中心 [‘Liberty’ and ‘Utility’ – Liang Qichao's ‘Utilitarianism’],” *Zhongshan daxue xuebao* 中山大學學報, no. 5 (2009). In the article, Kawajiri carefully plots out the historical path behind Liang Qichao's concept of utilitarianism.

utilitarianism to reconstruct Mohist thought is an example of the patriotic drive to learn from the West in order to resist the Western powers. Their appropriation also spurred the process in which culturally loaded Western terms, such as “ethics,” “logic,” “equality,” and “philosophy,” sought to achieve a legitimate foothold in Chinese cultural discourse. These Western terms, which gradually worked their way into studies on ancient Chinese thought around the end of the Qing and early stages of the Republic, soon dominated discourse in the field and ultimately led scholars to explain Chinese concepts through a Western lens. This has had an impact on the way in which Chinese thought has been and continues to be studied. Understanding how Western terms were adopted by Chinese scholars to explain Chinese culture can help us to better see the direction of current cultural exchanges between China and the West today and is an area that is certainly worth exploring further.

Translated by Michael Broughton

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On the English Translation of *Jian'ai* by Late Qing Missionary-Sinologists

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Abstract

With an increasing volume of research being conducted on the transmission of premodern Chinese thought in the Western world, a plethora of studies have been published on the English translation of the ancient text *Mozi*, primarily through the lens of cross-cultural translation studies. Discussions on how the concept of *jian'ai* – often rendered as “universal love” – should be expressed in English have also taken place in this framework, while the topic has rarely been examined hermeneutically or with reference to histories of knowledge transfer, intellectuals, or scholarship. This article discusses the translation of *jian'ai* into English by the missionary-sinologists Joseph Edkins and James Legge during the mid-to-late 1800s. It points out that, while both scholars used the term “universal” to translate the concept, they differed on whether “equal” could be used. The author also demonstrates how differences in translation can signify differences in thinking. Using the “unit of thought” of hermeneutics as a methodology to study the translators’ conception of *jian'ai* via a comparison of common structural levels, a case can be made that both of them used the criticism by Mengzi of Mozi as a kind of “situational construction”. However, in terms of “situational processing”, Edkin’s demonstrated the necessity and equality of *jian'ai* by quoting the words of ancient sages and wise rulers just as Mozi did, while Legge focused on the “Teng Wen Gong I” chapter of the *Mengzi*, arguing that the idea of “equality” was not espoused by Mozi himself but rather his later followers. From the perspective of “situational fusion”, Edkins pointed out that, while *jian'ai* is similar in form to the love of Christ, it in fact shares more similarities with utilitarianism. By contrast, Legge believed that *jian'ai* was more in line with the thought of Confucius, while he also discussed the similarities and differences between *jian'ai* and the love of Christ. The differing understandings of *jian'ai* arrived at by these two scholars demonstrates that missionaries sent to China

after the mid-nineteenth century underwent a transition from amateur to professional sinologists. Moreover, by examining how Mohism was introduced to the West in modern times, it can be shown how Legge's interpretation of *jian'ai* coined a longstanding translated name for the concept.

Keywords

missionary-sinologists – Joseph Edkins – James Legge – *jian'ai* – unit of thought

1 Introduction¹

As more scholars have begun to examine the transmission of Chinese classical thought to the West, the translation of premodern Chinese texts and terminology into non-Sinitic languages has become a popular avenue for research, especially over the past decade. It is in this context that the increasing number of translation studies on the ancient Chinese text the *Mozi* 墨子 have been conducted. In terms of content, these studies mainly examined the various English translations of the *Mozi*,² or the translation study of a single text, or the comparative study of several different translations.³ In addition, individual articles also discussed the translation of related terms.⁴ In terms of methodology, the translation studies of the *Mozi* usually make use of a particular translation theory,⁵ or

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2 Due to space restrictions, the author is unable to provide an exhaustive overview of research in this area. A good starting point is Liao Zhiyang 廖志陽, “*Mozi* yingyi gaiguan 《墨子》英譯概觀 [A Brief English Translation History of the *Mozi*],” *Zhongnan daxue xuebao* 中南大學學報, no. 2 (2013): 232–36.

3 For example Wang Hong 王宏, “*Mozi* yingyi duibi yanjiu 《墨子》英譯對比研究 [A Study Comparing the Various English Translations of the *Mozi*],” *Jiefangjun waiyuoyu xueyuan xuebao* 解放軍外國語學院學報, no. 6 (2006): 55–60.

4 For example Zhang Yin 張茵, “*Mozi Shangxian zhong fanyi duibi de tantao* 《墨子·尚賢中》翻譯對比的探討 [Discussing a Comparison of Translations of the Second Part of the Shangxian Chapter in *Mozi*],” *Kejiao wenhui (Zhongxun kan)* 科教文匯 (中旬刊), Sep (2009): 251–65.

5 The translation of the *Mozi* into English has been examined from a variety of perspectives. For research through the lens of deep translation see Zhu Jianping 朱健平 et al., “*Ai Qiao'en qi'e ban Mozi yingyi zhong shendu fanyi celüe yanjiu* 艾喬恩企鵝版《墨子》英譯中深度翻譯策略研究 [A Study of In-depth Translation Strategies in the English Translation of the *Mozi* by Ian Johnston Published by Penguin],” *Waiyu jiaoxue* 外語教學, no. 2 (2019): 99–103; or Deng Chun 鄧春, “*Cong shendu fanyi de shijiao duibi fenxi Mozi liubu yingyiben: Yi 'jian'ai shang zhong xia' de yingyi wei li* 從深度翻譯的視角對比分析《墨子》六部英譯本: 以‘兼

use hermeneutics as a methodology⁶ to scrutinize translation methods and the process of introduction to foreign readerships. Generally speaking, previous studies that discussed translation issues have tended to discuss the translation gains and losses of the *Mozi* and its individual terms from the standpoint of cross-cultural research with a focus on the actual differences between the Chinese and English languages. However, how to “situate” [*qingjinghua* 情境化] the cross-cultural meaning presented in the English translations of the *Mozi* – especially from the history of concepts, knowledge transfer and hermeneutics – to reveal the significance of its scholarly and intellectual history has not been a common concern among scholars.

The earliest English translation of *jian'ai* 兼愛 that the author has sighted is that of Joseph Edkins [1823–1905], a missionary of the London Missionary Society, who published “Notices of the Character and Writings of Meh tsi” in 1859, wherein he translated the term as “equal and universal love”. Later, when James Legge [1815–1897], also a missionary of the Society, published *The Works of Mencius* in 1861, he decided to translate sections I, II and III of the “Jian'ai” chapter into English. He used the phrase “universal love” to translate the term,

愛（上、中、下）’的英譯為例 [A Comparative Analysis of Six English Versions of the *Mozi* from the Perspective of Thick Translation, Taking the Translation of ‘Jian'ai I, II, III’ as an Example],” *Waiyu jiaoyu yanjiu* 外語教育研究, no. 2 (2015): 64–71; For discussions on translation standardization theory see Gao Yuanyuan 高媛媛, “Fanyi guifanlun shijiao xia *Mozi* yingyi duibi yanjiu 翻譯規範論視角下《墨子》英譯對比研究 [A Comparative Study of the English Translations of the *Mozi* from the Perspective of Translation Norm Theory],” *Jiaoyu xiandaihua* 教育現代化, no. 51 (2017): 294–5; For multimodal theory see Xu Bin 徐斌, Wang Jiali 王佳莉 and Yi Fang 易芳, “Duo motai shiyu xia *Mozi* yingyi tanxi 多模態視域下《墨子》英譯探析 [An Analysis of the English Versions of the *Mozi* from the Perspective of Multimodality],” *Chuangxin chuangye lilun yanjiu yu shijian* 創新創業理論研究與實踐, no. 17 (2020): 151–3. For discussions on the problem of variation in translation from a cross-cultural standpoint see Zou Su 鄒素, “*Mozi* zongjiao guannian yingyi bianyi yanjiu: Yi Li Shaokun yingyiben wei li 《墨子》宗教觀念英譯變異研究: 以李紹崑英譯本為例 [A Study on Variations of Religious Concepts in English Translations of the *Mozi*: Taking Cyrus Lee's Version as an Example],” *Heilongjiang shengtai gongcheng zhiye xueyuan xuebao* 黑龍江生態工程職業學院學報, no. 2 (2017): 156–8. For discussions on text misinterpretation and translation strategies see Miao Xuemei 苗雪梅, “*Mozi* yingyiben zhong de wenben wushi yu fanyi celue 《墨子》英譯本中的文本誤釋與翻譯策略 [Text Misinterpretations and Translation Strategies in English Versions of the *Mozi*],” *Hebei guangbo dianshi daxue xuebao* 河北廣播電視大學學報, no. 2 (2013): 60–3. For discussions on translation comparison and retranslation issues see Liu Lisheng 劉立勝, “*Mozi* fuyi yu yizhe huayuquan jiangou celue bijiao yanjiu 《墨子》複譯與譯者話語權建構策略比較研究 [A Study on the Retranslations of the *Mozi* and Translators' Discourse Power Constructing Strategies],” *Zhejiang waiguoyu xueyuan xuebao* 浙江外國語學院學報, no. 1 (2017): 75–81.

- 6 Zhi Yu 支羽 and Zhu Bo 朱波, “Chanshixue shijiao xia de yizhe zhutixing: Cong Wang Rongpei de *Mozi* yingyi tanqi 闡釋學視角下的譯者主體性: 從汪榕培的《墨子》英譯談起 [Translator Subjectivity from the Perspective of Hermeneutics in Wang Rongpei's English Translation of the *Mozi*],” *Xibeigongye daxue xuebao* 西北工業大學學報, no. 4 (2013): 84–7.

demonstrating his completely different view on whether *jian'ai* can connote a sense of equality.

A concept is a collection of ideas – so when it is translated, a different translation is inevitably the result of a different way of thinking. The English translations of *jian'ai* by the two aforementioned missionary-sinologists reflect their theoretical “reconstruction” [*chonggou* 重構] of the term. This includes the process from textual understanding to theoretical reconstruction. How should scholars interpret the works of the missionary-sinologists? Lee Hsien-Chung 李賢中 from the Department of Philosophy at National Taiwan University has recently explored the use of the creative explanatory methodology of “unit of thought” [*sixiang danwei* 思想單位]⁷ as an ideological tool in the context of traditional Chinese literature. He posited that the unit of thought is a meaningful thinking situation that contains “so” [*ran* 然], “why something is so” [*suoyiran* 所以然] and “reasoning factors” [*silu yaosu* 思路要素], and can deploy the theories of “situational construction” [*qingjing gouzuo* 情境構作], “situational processing” [*qingjing chuli* 情境處理] and “situational fusion” [*qingjing ronghe* 情境融合] proposed by hermeneutics. Lee makes the case that this is possible because the unit of thought touches upon the following aspects:

1. A description of the observed phenomenon, i.e., the situational structure of the unit of thought: What is there? What is it?

7 Lee Hsien-Chung 李賢中 posits that a “unit of thought” [*sixiang danwei* 思想單位] is a meaningful thinking situation. It is formed by converting objective things in a cognitive environment into subjective thinking situations or understanding objective words in the literature as one’s own interpretation. A unit of thought contains “so” [*ran* 然], “why something is so” [*suoyiran* 所以然] and “reasoning factors” [*silu yaosu* 思路要素]. It is derived from – but not equivalent to – the thinking situation. It is like a video in which some process fragments are “so”, while some are based on the thinking of related issues and the interpretation of some fragments – the “why something is so” – which connect and synthesize the “so” and the “reasoning factors”. Only the comprehensible, interpretable, and meaningful characteristics constituted by the “reasoning factors” and the “why something is so” can constitute a unit of thought. Likewise, only a thinking situation that can reasonably explain what is seen or constructed can constitute a unit of thought. Units of thought can be divided into three levels: “situational construction” [*qingjing gouzuo* 情境構作], “situational processing” [*qingjing chuli* 情境處理] and “situational fusion” [*qingjing ronghe* 情境融合]. See Lee Hsien-Chung 李賢中, “Mojia ‘feigong’ yu *Shengjing* youguan ‘zhanzheng’ sixiang zhi bijiao 墨家‘非攻’與《聖經》有關‘戰爭’思想之比較 [A Comparison of Mohist Condemnation of Offensive Warfare and the Biblical Concept of War],” *Zhexue yu wenhua* 哲學與文化, no. 12 (2019): 5–23; see also Lee Hsien-Chung 李賢中, “Lun xianqin luojishi zhong daiyou sixiang neihan de tuili ludong 論先秦邏輯史中帶有思想內涵的推理律動 [The History of Pre-Qin Logic: A Reasoning Rhythm with Ideological Significance],” *Hubei daxue xuebao* 湖北大學學報, no. 1 (2018): 28–30.

2. An explanation of the causal relationship (ethics, interest, power, structure, etc.) between things in the phenomenon, i.e., the situational processing of the unit of thought: Why?
3. A prediction of the future development of the phenomenon, i.e., situational processing of the unit of thought: What will happen?
4. A processing or resolution of issues found in the phenomenon, i.e., situational processing of the unit of thought: What can be done?
5. Periodic feedback, correction and integration after processing or resolving the issue, i.e., situational fusion of the unit of thought: The elements of “what is there”, “what is it”, “why”, “what if” and “what should be done” are all in harmony with each other.⁸

This article will use the method of unit of thought in hermeneutics to analyze the two translators' conception of *jian'ai* by comparing common structural levels and analyzing the relationship between the various levels of theory and the elements of thinking in the unit of thought. It will be demonstrated that the reasoning factors of missionary-sinologists' translation of *jian'ai* are themselves a theoretical reconstruction of Mozi's 墨子 [ca. 468–376 BCE] ideas on *jian'ai* that have been imbued with modern significance. The specific issues that the author intends to address are as follows: What disagreements do the two translators have regarding the English translation of *jian'ai*? Furthermore, what do their translations reveal about their contrastive conceptions of *jian'ai*? Lastly, how can their differing interpretations of *jian'ai* be understood through the lens of the broader history of Western sinology?

2 Disputes regarding the Translation of *Jian'ai* into English

In 1859, Joseph Edkins translated *jian'ai* as “the doctrine of equal and universal” in his article about Mozi, with different wording employed in different contexts. For example, when quoting Mengzi's 孟子 [372–289 BCE] criticism of Mozi, he translated the term as “all men should be equally loved”, while when discussing the significance of the concept he translated it as “mutual love”.⁹ Edkins also elaborated on what he saw as the connotation of equality

8 Lee Hsien-Chung, “Mojia 'feigong' yu *Shengjing* youguan 'zhazheng' sixiang zhi bijiao,” 5–6.

9 Edkins wrote: “Only let men throughout the world love each other ... Why then does not every sage, whose business it is to explain how the world ought to be governed, adopt this principle and exhort men to mutual love?” Here, *jian'ai* is rendered as “mutual love” which demonstrates that Edkins also believed that such a concept can be described as “mutual”. See Joseph Edkins, “Notices of the Character and Writings of Meh Ts'i,” *Journal of the North China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, no. 2 (1859): 166.

at the heart of *jian'ai*. *Jian'ai* is expressed as “universal love” in the source, with the term “equal” following thereafter, emphasized in italics. Edkins further posited that Mozi believed in the principle of not only loving one’s neighbor as oneself but also loving all people equally.¹⁰

Two years later, fellow missionary Legge translated *jian'ai* as “universal love” in the second volume of his translated collection of Chinese classics. He also translated *jian xiang ai* 兼相愛 as “mutual love” and *jiao xiang li* 交相利 as “mutual benefit”. Thus, it is evident that he believed that “mutual” could correspond to the meaning of *jian* 兼. As a result, he sometimes rendered *jian xiang ai* as “universal mutual love” in his translation of the “Jian'ai” chapter.¹¹

In Legge’s mind, it was necessary to limit the research object to understand the “equal” sense of universal love. Regarding discussion on this issue, he started from the standpoint of rebutting Mengzi:

Here it was that Mencius joined issue with him. He affirmed that “to love all equally did not acknowledge the peculiar affection due to a parent.” It is to be observed that Mo himself nowhere says that his principle was that of loving all equally. His disciples drew this conclusion from it. In the third Book of Mencius’ Works, we find one of them, Î Chih, contending that the expression in the Shû-ching, about the ancient kings acting towards the people “as if they were watching over an infant,” sounded to him as if love were to be *without difference of degree*, the manifestation of it simply commencing with our parents. To this Mencius replied conclusively by asking, “Does Î really think that a man’s affection for the child of his brother is merely like his affection for the child of his neighbour?” With still more force might he have asked, “Is a man’s affection for his father merely like his affection for the father of his neighbour?” Such a question, and the necessary reply to it, are implied in his condemnation of Mo’s system, as being “without father,” that is, denying the peculiar affection due to a father. If Mo had really maintained that a man’s father was to be no more to him than the father of any other body, or if his system had necessitated such a consequence, Mencius would only have done his duty to his country in denouncing him, and exposing the fallacy of his reasonings. As the case is, he would have done better if he had shown that no such conclusion necessarily flows from the doctrine of

10 Joseph Edkins, “Notices of the Character and Writings of Meh Tsi,” 166.

11 James Legge, “Chapter III of Yang Chû and Mo Ti,” in *The Chinese Classics*, ed. James Legge (Shanghai: Huadong shifan daxue chubanshe, 2010), 2:102–16.

Universal Love, or its preceptive form that we are to love our neighbour as ourselves.¹²

Legge's discussion comes from a dialogue between Ruists and Mohists in the "Teng Wen Gong I 滕文公上" chapter of the *Mengzi* 孟子. A Mohist by the name of Yi Zhi 夷之 asked to see Mengzi. Mengzi first declined to meet him, but Yi Zhi persisted and came back a second time. However, before Mengzi met with him, he asked his student Xu Bi 徐辟 why Yi Zhi – a follower of Mohism and advocate of frugality – would give his parents a lavish burial. Here, Mengzi was accusing Yi Zhi of being unfilial towards his parents, or at the very least of departing from the ideals he espoused. Xu Bi relayed the Mengzi's message to Yi Zhi, who replied with the famous words: "According to the ways of the Ruists, the ancient rulers treated their people 'as if tending to new-born infants'. What do these words actually mean? I believe that there should be no graduations in love, though practicing it begins with one's parents."¹³ Xu Bi then passed on Yi Zhi's sentiments to Mengzi, who responds by arguing that, although saving a baby who is about to fall into a well is an instinctive response of human nature in an emergency, this does not mean that under normal circumstances people can love their relatives and others without degrees of intimacy. One loves relatives more than others because one is born by one's parents. To remove the graduations of love is to equate one's parents with strangers which is contrary to the essential value system of Ruism. Legge clearly understood what Mengzi meant here. It was precisely because of Legge's his own beliefs and knowledge that he could point out how Mengzi's reasoning actually contained a kind of logical dilemma and some sort of ethical paradox.

Of course, this does not mean that Legge, like Edkins, accepted the completely opposite view of Mengzi, that is, that universal love is equal love. In fact, when he translated the title of "Jian'ai", he quoted the *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字 in the form of footnotes to discuss the meaning of *jian* in Chinese, claiming that it signified many different kinds of love. He went on to write that we was not sure if it would be better translated as "universal love", but ultimately conceded that Mengzi and other literati also regarded *jian* as "equal" and that, in their eyes, *jian'ai* was equivalent to the equal love of all.¹⁴ In Legge's understanding, the referents of *jian* may be more inclusive than equal. In the subsequent analysis, Legge gradually revealed a "truth": that the implication of

12 James Legge, "Chapter III of Yang Chû and Mo Tî," 2:101.

13 Jiao Xun 焦循, *Mengzi zhengyi* 孟子正義 [*The Correct Meaning of the Mengzi*], coll. Shen Wenzhuo 沈文倬 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1987), 403.

14 James Legge, "Chapter III of Yang Chû and Mo Tî," 2:101.

the kind of universal love criticized by Mengzi was deduced at the beginning of creation. The so-called love of all people was a product of Mozi's later followers, and was not the point of view that Mozi himself had at the outset. This "historical" feature of this interpretation of *jian'ai* also raises a more important question: the core teachings of the *Mozi* are primarily expounded in chapters I, II and III. Do the differences in length and subtle changes in content also imply that the text has undergone a "historical" formative process? This issue has been overlooked by academics both in and outside of China. It was not until 1985 that A. C. Graham discussed the doctrinal differentiations of early Mohists and explored the relationship between the textual formation of the *Mozi* and the various Mohist factions. This is considered to be the first time the aforementioned issues have been explored,¹⁵ but a meaningful discussion of the historical issues pertaining to the text formation of the *Mozi* had not been had until they were raised by Erik W. Maeder in 1992.¹⁶ In the new century, Carine Defoort from the University of Leuven and the doctoral dissertations under her supervision have discussed these issues in some depth.¹⁷ Legge's discussions on the various meanings of *jian'ai* thus have had far-reaching implications for Mohist studies even up this the current century.

3 Edkins' Conception of *Jian'ai*

If a translated name [*yiming* 譯名] is the external manifestation of thought, then behind its coinage must lie a collection of thoughts. In the following section, the author will use the unit of thought as a way to analyze Edkin's conception of *jian'ai*.

3.1 *Edkins' Conception of Jian'ai as a Unit of Thought*

1. All the confusion that exists in the moral world, according to his system, springs from the want of love among men. From this origin come the

15 Augus Graham, *Divisions in Early Mohism Reflected in the Core Chapters of Mo-Tzu* (Singapore: Institute of East Asia Philosophies, 1985).

16 See Erik W. Maeder, "Some Observations on the Composition of the Core Chapters of the *Mozi*," *Early China* 17 (1992): 27–82.

17 See Carine Defoort and Nicolas Standaert, eds., *The Mozi as an Evolving Text: Different Voices in Early Chinese Thought*, vol. 4 of *Studies in the History of Chinese Texts* (Leiden: Brill, 2013). For the doctoral dissertation of Defoort's PhD student see Karen Desmet, "All Good Things Come in Threes: A Textual Analysis of the Three-fold Structure of the Mohist Ethical 'Core Chapters'" (PhD diss., Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, 2007).

disobedience of sons and the unkindness of brothers. Robbery, oppression, rebellion, and all the evils depending on the perverse conduct of men that can afflict the commonwealth, proceed also from this source. If men loved their sons, brothers, and subjects as they do themselves, there would be no unkindness, no oppression. If a man esteemed his neighbour's house and his neighbour's person to be as precious as his own, he would not become a thief. Should men regard the inhabitants of other countries with the affection they bear to their own, there would be no war. Only let men throughout the world love, each other, and fighting and strife will cease; the father will love his son and the son be filial towards his father's oppression and rebellion will disappear, and perfect order be restored among the human race. Why then does not every sage, whose business it is to explain how the world ought to be governed, adopt this principle and exhort men to mutual love?¹⁸

Units of thought:

1. What is there? There are evil acts such as unfilial piety, robbery, oppression, and rebellion. (This is a description of a series of phenomena and issues.)
2. What is it? It is suffering in the world. (This is a conclusion based on the aforementioned human suffering, and it is related to people's feelings about the phenomenon, which positions the description of the phenomenon.)
3. Why is that? Because of a lack of *jian'ai*. (This is a conclusion based on the aforementioned idea that all confusion that exists in the moral world stems from a lack of love between people and the reason behind the related phenomenon.)
4. What would happen if *jian'ai* were practiced? There would be no unkindness or oppression. (According to the rationale that if men loved their sons, brothers, and subjects as they do themselves, there would be no unkindness, no oppression, and eventually there would be no potential for war either.)
5. What should be done? The world must be governed with *jian'ai* and its precepts should be promoted. (A solution to the problem is offered.)

2. In advocating universal love, this philosopher lays great stress on the circumstance that it should be equal towards all. He observes that when men begin to distinguish between one man and another, hatred and

18 Joseph Edkins, "Notices of the Character and Writings of Meh Tsi," 166.

injustice make their appearance. The right principle is, he contends, to love others as we do ourselves, and to love all equally. We are not to make a distinction in love between another kingdom and our own. He would have men feel as much desire that their neighbor should not be robbed of his property as that they themselves may not suffer in that manner.¹⁹

Units of thought:

1. What is there? Hatred and injustice exist. (The phenomenon is described.)
2. What is it? It is an improper method. (The correct principle is to love others as one loves oneself.)
3. Why is that? Because people make distinctions of others. (This is the reason behind the phenomenon.)
4. What will happen? Hatred and injustice will emerge. (This is in line with the development of the phenomenon.)
5. What should be done? One should love others as one loves oneself, and love everyone equally. (Here the solution to the problem is provided.)

3. The coincidence here with the doctrine of love in the New Testament is surely not a little remarkable, especially as found in the extant works of an author who lived in China four or five centuries before the Christian era. Strange it is that such a doctrine should have been proposed in China so long ago and rejected.

There are, however, some important differences in the form given to this doctrine by Meh tsï. He bases it upon *political utility*, while our Saviour rests the obligation to love on religious and moral grounds. The Christian is to love in obedience to the will, and in imitation of the example, of God. Meh tsï, moreover, does not say, "love your enemies." His view is too utilitarian for this; the highest point reached by him is, if you love me as I love you, we shall both be the better for so doing. The apostle John describes love as a spontaneous activity, flowing from a heart touched with gratitude. We love him, because he first loved us." I am to love my brother man, because Christ died for him as for me. Our Chinese philosopher knew nothing of such an origin for his favorite principle, deep among the foundations of our moral and emotional nature. His views, while resembling Christianity in form, are much more akin in reality to the opinions of Bentham and Paley, who, had he lived in their day, would doubtless have claimed him as an ally.²⁰

19 Joseph Edkins, "Notices of the Character and Writings of Meh Tsï," 167.

20 Joseph Edkins, "Notices of the Character and Writings of Meh Tsï," 167–68.

Units of thought:

1. What is there? Mozi's *jian'ai* takes a similar form to that of the doctrine of love in the New Testament.
2. What is it? It is a different theoretical basis. (This is a description of the phenomenon, and the essence behind the phenomenon.)
3. Why is that? The foundation of *jian'ai* is political utility while the love of Jesus is based on religion and morality. (This touches upon the social setting, ethics, personal interests and many other factors involved in the problem.)
4. What will happen? "If Mozi lived in their time, they would undoubtedly regard him as an ally." (This conforms with the development of the logic.)
5. What should be done? A distinction must be made between *jian'ai* and the love of Christ. (This is in accordance with the aforementioned idea that, although his views are similar to Christianity in form, in reality they are closer to the views of Bentham and Paley. Here, a solution to the problem is provided.)

3.2 *General Idea behind Edkins' Conception of Jian'ai*

It can be seen that the unit of thought is a specific and effective hermeneutical method by which a problem can be made clearer and more logical. Based on the analysis of the above units of thought, the author will now discuss the overall thinking behind Edkins' conception of *jian'ai*. As Lee Hsien-Chung pointed out, "Theories are composed of units of thought, while the scopes of those theories are broader than the units of thought that reside in them".²¹ Therefore, considering the relative completeness of a given theory, the following thoughts on Edkin's conception of *jian'ai* will touch upon other passages from his writings.

Why did Mengzi criticize Mozi? Mozi's proposal of *jian'ai* is a departure from the love of his parents. Furthermore, Mengzi believed that this was an attack on Confucius' [551–479 BCE] integrity and his doctrines. → What is *jian'ai*? *Jian'ai* posits that loving everyone equally is a broad principle that can maintain order in a given state. → Why does Mozi advocate *jian'ai*? There are various evils in society such as robbery, oppression, rebellion, hatred and injustice. → What are the consequences of a lack of *jian'ai*? It will cause disputes and wars. → What is the purpose of practicing *jian'ai*? People will love each other and society will be restored to perfect order. → Is there any concept of *jian'ai* in the Western world? Yes, there is. The doctrine of love in the New Testament is very similar to it. → Is the concept of *jian'ai* identical to that of the love of

21 Lee Hsien-Chung, "Mojia 'feigong' yu Shengjing youguan 'zhanzheng' sixiang zhi bijiao," 9.

Christ? No. There are theoretical flaws in the conception of *jian'ai*. → What is the problem with the conception of *jian'ai*? Since *jian'ai* is constructed on the basis of political utility, it completely ignores the religious, moral, and emotional basis of Christ's love. → How should *jian'ai* be understood? In essence, *jian'ai* is closer to the idea of utilitarianism.²²

The discussion outlined above attempts to present Edkins' thoughts on reconstructing the idea of *jian'ai* in a deductive way. If analyzed from various levels of theory, the situational construction of the significance of *jian'ai* starts with Mengzi's criticism of Mozi and extends to Mozi's pursuit for the most suitable principle for establishing order in a given state. It is believed to be developed by loving all people equally in order to resolve the moral chaos present in the society in which one lives. In terms of situational processing, the concept of *jian'ai* espoused by Mozi emphasized the equality of all people, which conflicted with traditional Chinese morality, especially filial piety, and resulted in all later advocates of *jian'ai* to be regarded as heretics. In fact, Mozi believed that the key embodiment of *jian'ai* is not only found in the benevolent ruler, but should also be seen in the fulfilling of duties by ordinary people. He also concluded that widespread practice of *jian'ai* would bring peace to the world. In terms of situational fusion, Edkins believed that Mozi's *jian'ai* makes its appearance in Western thought and theology, and that the coincidental elements of *jian'ai* and the love of Christ can be made manifest after careful investigation. The two are mainly similar in form, while *jian'ai* lacks the theoretical foundations of theology and morality. As far as the motivation of *jian'ai* is concerned, it is closer to utilitarianism, but in any case, *jian'ai* should be valued even outside the Ruist cosmology.²³

22 Upon reviewing the author's work, Lee Hsien-Chung has explained via email correspondence that, "Edkins' belief that universal love is closer to utilitarianism reflects but one aspect of Mohism. From the perspective of Heaven's Intention, Righteousness, and Proactive Loving of Others in Spite of Non-Accomplishment one can see the staunch belief of the Mohists that individuals should act in accordance with the ways of Heaven, and that doing so is advantageous to them." There is little room here to discuss the numerous debates both in and outside of China on the relationship between *jian'ai* and utilitarianism. For a review on this topic, see Nie Tao 聶濤, "Zhaoshi yu liubian: Jinshi mozi sixiang de gongli zhuyi chanshi de zhongxi chengqi 肇始與流變：近世墨子思想的功利主義闡釋的中西承啓 [Beginnings and Evolutions: The Utilitarian Interpretation of Mohist Thought in Modern Times]," *Shehui kexuejia* 社會科學家, no. 8 (2016): 22–6.

23 Joseph Edkins, "Notices of the Character and Writings of Meh Tsi," 166–9.

4 Legge's Conception of *Jian'ai*

4.1 *Units of Thought Contained in Legge's Conception of Jian'ai*

Legge's reconstruction of *jian'ai* can also be clearly seen through the unit of thought. The following discussion will reflect on the unit of thought through the lens of Legge's interpretation of Mozi.

1. Still, he has broadly and distinctly laid it down, that if men would only universally love one another, the evils which disturb and embitter human society would disappear. I do not say that he has taught the duty of universal love. His argument is conducted on the ground of expediency. Whether he had in his own mind a truer, nobler foundation for his principle, does not immediately appear. Be that as it may, his doctrine was that men were to be exhorted to love one another, to love one another as themselves. According to him, "princes should be as much for the States of others as for their own. One prince should be for every other as for himself." So it ought to be also with the heads of clans, with ministers, with parents, and with men generally.²⁴

Units of thought:

1. What is there? There are Mozi's precepts of *jian'ai*. (As a translator and interpreter of the Chinese classics, Legge described the object of Mozi's *jian'ai* and identified its essential nature.)
2. What is it? It is borne out of the consideration of one's own interests.
3. Why is that? As long as people love each other, social evils will disappear. Individuals can also benefit. (Legge's reason for exploring this is that his discussion is based on his own interests.)
4. What will happen? Practicing *jian'ai* will restore social stability.
5. What should be done? One should practice *jian'ai* and love others as one would love oneself. (As discussed previously, princes should be as much for the states of others as for their own, and so the same should be said for clan leaders, ministers, parents, and individuals. Here, Legge provides a solution to the problem.)

2. Confucius, I think, might have dealt more fairly and generously with Mo. In writing of him, I called attention to his repeated enunciation of "the golden rule" in a negative form, – "What you do not wish done to yourself, do not do to others." In one place, indeed, he rises for a moment

²⁴ James Legge, "Chapter III of Yang Chû and Mo Ti," 2:117–8.

to the full apprehension of it, and recognizes the duty of taking the initiative, of behaving to others in the first instance as he would that they should behave to him. Now, what is this but the practical exercise of the principle of universal love? "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them" – this is simply the manifestation of the requirement, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Confucius might have conceded, therefore, to Mo, that the rule of conduct which he laid down was the very best that could be propounded. If he had gone on to remove it from the basis of expediency, and place it on a better foundation, he would have done the greatest service to his countrymen, and entitled himself to a place among the sages of the world.²⁵

Units of thought:

1. What is there? Something similar to *jian'ai* can be found in the teachings of both Confucius and Christ. (Here, questions are extracted from the examined phenomena.)
2. What is it? Expressions resembling *jian'ai* are present in Ruist and Christian doctrine alike. (There may not be a conflict between Kongzi's *ren'ai* and Mozi's *jian'ai*. One can look beyond the surface of the phenomenon by considering the common notion of treating others how one wishes to be treated that was previously discussed.)
3. Why is that? Legge compared the teachings of Kongzi, Mozi, and Jesus and concluded that if Mozi were to replace his concept of self-interest with a better theoretical foundation, then he would have made a great contribution to Chinese thought and secure his place among the sages of the world.
4. What will happen? Legge believed it necessary to remove the consideration of *jian'ai* that is based on self-interest.
5. What should be done? Mohist thought would have a greater influence on the world.

3. Mo's universal love was to find its scope and consummation in the good government of China. He had not the idea of man as man, any more than Confucius or Mencius. How can that idea be fully realized, indeed, where there is not the right knowledge of one living and true God, the creator and common parent of all? The love which Christianity inculcates is a law of humanity; paramount to all selfish, personal feelings; paramount to all relative, local, national attachments; paramount to all distinctions of race

25 James Legge, "Chapter III of Yang Chû and Mo Ti," 2:119–20.

or of religion. Apprehended in the spirit of Christ, it will go forth even to the love of enemies; it will energize in a determination to be always increasing the sum of others' happiness, limited only by the means of doing so. But I stop. These prolegomena are the place for disquisition; but I deemed it right to say thus much here of that true, universal love, which at once gives glory to God and effects peace on earth.²⁶

Units of thought:

1. What is there? There is the concept of *jian'ai* that is used for governance purposes.
2. What is it? *Jian'ai* is not about being human. (This is the essence of *jian'ai*.)
3. Why is that? Mozi's *jian'ai* lacks a kind of transcendent divinity. (This is based on the aforementioned idea that one cannot fully realize one's ideals without a proper understanding of the true living God, the creator and the common father of all people.)
4. What will happen? *Jian'ai* cannot surpass Confucius and Mengzi; it will be confined to the fetters of human nature, politics and secularity.
5. What should be done? To bring about peace, the love of Christ must be espoused. (This is the true manifestation of *jian'ai*.)

4.2 General Idea behind Legge's Conception of Jian'ai

After summarizing Legge's research on *jian'ai* from the perspective of the unit of thought, the following will discuss Legge's overall thinking on the concept. In order to outline a relatively complete picture of the theory, the author will consult Legge's writings on Mozi in their entirety.

Why did Mengzi oppose Mozi? It was the result of a struggle between different schools of thought.²⁷ → How does Mozi defend himself? Because Yu the Great 大禹, Tang of Shang 商湯, King Wen of Zhou 周文王 [r. 1106–1056 BCE], and King Wu of Zhou 周武王 [r. 1056–1043 BCE] all practiced *jian'ai*. → Did these ancient sages actually put *jian'ai* into practice? No. The first piece of Mozi's evidence is not valid. → Does fear of punishment really motivate people to practice *jian'ai*? No. The second piece of Mozi's evidence is not valid. → Why should one practice *jian'ai*? To resolve the ills of society. → So does that mean that the theoretical basis of *jian'ai* is the duty of love? No, it is but

26 James Legge, "Chapter III of Yang Chù and Mo Tì," 2:122.

27 Legge translated the three chapters on *jian'ai* to explore its philosophical implications and understand why it attracted such fierce criticism from Mengzi. To this end, he included an analysis on the subject directly after his translation. See James Legge, "Chapter III of Yang Chù and Mo Tì," 2:117.

the individual's self-interest. → What theory can persuade people to practice *jian'ai*? One should love others as one would love oneself; one should love the states of others as one would love one's own state. → What is the scope of application of *jian'ai*? People of all levels and groups of society can follow it. → Does this mean that *jian'ai* is to love all people equally? No, Mengzi misinterpreted Mozi's teachings. → Then why did Mengzi criticize Mozi's conception of love for lacking differentiation? This is the view of Mozi's followers, not his own viewpoint. In fact, the evidence we can see today comes from the debate between Mengzi and Yi Zhi in "Teng Wen Gong I". → Is there sufficient evidence for Mozi to defend his views? No. He merely emphasized that a person can only ensure happiness for his parents by practicing *jian'ai*. → Does this show that there is something wrong with Mozi's theory? Mozi only considers the basis of love from the point of interest, and Mengzi's discussion on the issues of human nature and moral restraint is broader and more precise than that of Mozi. → What do Mengzi and Mozi think about the dispute about love? Mozi accidentally discovered the true significance of *jian'ai*, which is of considerable significance to human society in that it can enrich the mind and provide the most reliable treatment for social ills. However, Mengzi could not accept it because he felt it was difficult to implement. He even absurdly compared Yang Zhu 楊朱 [395–335 BCE] and Mozi, presupposing them as enemies of humaneness and righteousness [*renyi* 仁義]. Therefore, there is a kind of ruthlessness to Mengzi's conception of human nature. → How would Confucius view the concept of *jian'ai*? Confucius would accept Mozi, because *jian'ai* can be interpreted in a way that is similar to that of the Confucian equivalent to the Golden Rule. → In "our religion" are there any thoughts similar to that of universal love? Yes. Christ's Golden Rule has a roughly similar meaning. → Is this the first time such a view has been held on *jian'ai*? No, the Tang [618–907] writer Han Yu 韓愈 [768–824] once argued that "the thought of Confucius and Mozi can be used simultaneously". In fact, our views are the same. → How is the love of Christ compared to *jian'ai*? The love of Christ is based on a kind of transcendent divinity. As a commandment, it requires that people must first love God. Therefore, Christianity requires everyone to dedicate themselves to loving God. From this love, each person's specific responsibilities are further clarified. Complementing the love of God and one's fellow citizens and loving others as loving oneself are practiced under this premise. → Is there any real *jian'ai*? Yes. → What is it? It is the love of Christ that brings glory to God and realizes peace in the world.²⁸

28 See James Legge, "Chapter III of Yang Chû and Mo Tî," 2:117–22.

Let us turn now to the situational construction of the concept of *jian'ai*. In his critique of Mengzi's opposition to Mozi, Legge perceived *jian'ai* as a tool to overcome the kinds of evil that harm society. In terms of situational processing, Legge's textual analysis of "Teng Wen Gong I" revealed that Mozi himself did not approve of loving all people equally. However, Mozi focused on self-interest in the theoretical construction of his own argumentation, and failed to find a deeper and broader theoretical basis. In this regard, one can use the respective doctrines of Confucius and Christ to enact situational fusion with Mozi's thought – from within Chinese thought, Confucius may understand and tolerate the teachings of Mozi, while outside Chinese thought, the love of Christ and the conception of universal love bear superficial resemblance to each other. Of course, after careful study and comparison, one may find that the love of Christ has transcendent divine value and loving one's neighbor as one loves oneself is actually an extension of the love of a supreme God. Therefore, the love of Christ can be seen as a kind of true universal love.²⁹

5 Shift from Amateur to Professional Sinologists

The author has used the interpretative method of the unit of thought to understand the different translations and interpretations of *jian'ai* by Edkins and Legge. It presents a logic of thought that spans the discovery of the problem to the offering of a solution. An examination of the respective scholarly interests of Edkins and Legge reveals their differing interpretations of "equality" as it relates to *jian'ai* and in their capacity as missionaries to China in mid-nineteenth century. As an amateur sinologist, Edkins was stationed in China to introduce the traditional ideas and modern conditions of China to the Western world, as well as to acquaint China with knowledge from the West. Legge was both a colleague and old acquaintance of Edkins. The two of them devoted an increasing amount of energy to academic research over the years.³⁰ Legge embarked on a professional study of the Chinese civilization, assuming the new Chair of Chinese Language and Literature at Oxford in 1876. From the perspective of the historical development of the field of sinology, this professional

29 See James Legge, "Chapter III of Yang Chû and Mo Tî," 2:117–22.

30 Norman J. Girardot 吉瑞德, *Chaojin Dongfang: Li Yage pingzhuan* 朝覲東方：理雅各評傳 [The Victorian Translation of China: James Legge's Oriental Pilgrimage], trans. Duan Huaqing 段懷清 and Zhou Liling 周俐玲 (Guilin: Guangxi shifan daxue chubanshe, 2011), 82.

dispute between the two missionaries came to a head when they began forming their interpretation of the concept of *jian'ai* around 1860.

Edkins was a well-deserved sinologist among the missionaries who came to China in the 19th century. He graduated from the University of London in his early years and received fairly good training in modern scientific knowledge. According to the archives of the University, in addition to Greek, Latin, and Hebrew, he also majored in mathematics and botany, natural philosophy and philosophy of mind and logic, and graduated from the institution with a Bachelor of Arts. After arriving in Shanghai in 1848, he immediately devoted himself to The London Missionary Society Press, known in Chinese as *Mohai shuguan* 墨海書館 by participating in translation work aimed at introducing modern Western scientific works to a Chinese-reading audience. After 1861, he travelled north to devote himself to missionary work in Tianjin and Beijing. He served as a bridge in a specific period of Early Modern [*jindai zaoqi* 近代早期] Chinese history³¹ by gradually contributing to the two-way knowledge transfer between the East and the West. He not only introduced Western science to Chinese scholar-officials, but introduced humanistic knowledge to them as well. The earliest Greek and Roman history that can be sighted in modern Chinese sources are *A Brief History of Greece* [*Xila zhiliu* 希臘志略] and *A Brief History of Rome* [*Luoma zhiliu* 羅馬志略] from the *Western Learning Book Series* [*Xixue qimeng congshu* 西學啟蒙叢書] that were both translated by Edkins. He also introduced Chinese thought to the Western world, from Buddhist and Daoist philosophy, to geography, language and history, as well as all kinds of aspects of contemporary China of the time such as taxation, currency, and finance.³² Edkins' scholarly interest in China was so wide-ranging that it can be seen as a vivid portrayal of a distinctive feature of the history of European sinology in the 18th and 19th centuries, as at that time all knowledge about China was generated by the expertise of sinologists.

Edkins was proficient in Chinese, being not only familiar with northern Mandarin, but also with Shanghaiese. In contrast, Legge, who had lived in

31 How this period should be delineated has long been controversial among historians. The author here is referring to the period of 1840–1895, which reflects the general understanding of Western learning among the Qing gentry at the time.

32 On Edkins' contributions as a sinologist, see the third part ("Missionaries as Modern Scholars and the Transfer of Chinese and Western Knowledge") of the author's work: Chu Lijuan 褚麗娟, "Wanqing chuanjiaoshi: Hanxuejia Ai Yuese de Moxue sixiang chutan 晚清傳教士: 漢學家艾約瑟的墨學思想初探 [A Preliminary Study on the Mohist Thought of Missionary: Sinologist Joseph Edkins in the Late Qing Dynasty]," *Zhexue yu wenhua* 哲學與文化, no. 12 (2019): 63–78. See also Yu Manyi 喻滿意, "Ai Yuese yu 19 shiji yingguo de hanxue 艾約瑟與 19 世紀英國的漢學 [Joseph Edkins and Sinology in England in the 19th Century]" (PhD diss., Nankai University, 2015).

Hong Kong for a long time, may have been able to meet his research needs in the written language, but his spoken command left something to be desired. Before returning to England in 1873, Legge embarked on a journey to northern China. During part of the tour he was accompanied by Edkins who had been living in northern China for a long time and was able to speak fluent Mandarin, a feat Legge was incapable of replicating.³³

Evidently, Legge's shortcomings in oral Chinese did not prevent him from becoming the preeminent sinologist in the Western world after the 1870s. After the publication of his five-volume classics work in 1861, it has been republished many times so far, and it is a well-deserved classic in English translation. With the death of the renowned French sinologist Stanislas Julien [1797–1873], Legge became the only translator and interpreter of the most influential Chinese classics in the Western world.³⁴ His achievements were recognized by his fellow scholars at the time. Max Müller [1823–1900], the head of the Faculty of Oriental Studies at Oxford, hired him as the first professor of sinology. The appointment of Legge to this post also meant that, over the previous two centuries, the European sinological community shifted its focus from research in Latin and French to research in the English language. In addition, the translation work for the *Sacred Books of the East* series that Müller presided over was mainly undertaken by Legge. This set of works, together with Legge's translation of the Chinese classics during his stay in Hong Kong, served as the greatest academic project in the translation of Chinese classics and comparative oriental studies at the end of the 19th century, and has had widespread impact since then, with sinology thereafter gaining recognition in the Western academe as a specialized field of oriental studies.³⁵

Legge was a professional sinologist. His depth and breadth of understanding of the Chinese classics had already formed by the time he relocated to Hong Kong, and his dedication to academic rigor is undeniable. In order to translate the core texts that expound the values and belief systems of Ruism known as the Four Books [*sishu* 四書] he hired a research assistant by the name of Wang Tao 王韜 [1828–1897]. When translating the *Mengzi*, he specially translated the three chapters on *jian'ai* and some of the teachings of Yang Zhu. It can be said that this was a response to Mengzian thought based on the Chinese system of scholarship. Naturally, Legge's perspective on Chinese scholarship may not have been fully formed during the Hong Kong period, but its embryonic

33 Edkins arrived in Tianjin in 1861 and began his missionary work in Beijing in 1863.

34 Norman J. Girardot, *Chaojin Dongfang: Li Yage pingzhuan*, 57.

35 Norman J. Girardot, *Chaojin Dongfang: Li Yage pingzhuan*, 121.

form had already appeared.³⁶ As a 19th-century sinologist who accepted modern knowledge, his perspective served to illuminate the thought of Mozi. Under the strong influence of Western learning, the Chinese tendency towards modernity gradually grew in intensity, especially after 1895 when the gentry of the late Qing dynasty [1616–1911] experienced rapid ideological shifts and Western learning increased in popularity. It was in this historical context that a resurgence in research on Mohist thought occurred.

The broad learning of traditional sinology is vividly reflected in Edkins. Judging from his works, he does not seem to have the same perspective that would enable him to understand the Chinese classics like Legge did. Moreover, it would have been unrealistic to have expected him to interpret the Chinese classics from the perspective of the Chinese scholarly tradition. His understanding of *jian'ai* was more based on his external perspective as a British missionary-sinologist. Therefore, he integrated the implications of “equality” into his interpretation of *jian'ai*, something which Legge could not accept. A detail that is easily overlooked is that Legge quoted in one of his footnotes that Edkins pointed out the similarities of utilitarianism to *jian'ai*. However, he did not express disagreement with Edkin’s point of view in his translation of *jian'ai*, choosing instead to write at length about whether *jian'ai* could be interpreted in this manner. This may suggest that Legge felt it inappropriate to point out Edkins’ “mistake”, deciding instead to merely express his different understanding. It can also be seen that Legge’s discussion of *jian'ai* was based on rigorous academic research with a view to its history of scholarship. As a result, Edkins and Legge differ on whether *jian'ai* carries a connotation of “equal”.

36 On this point, it may be possible to identify one or two changes in Legge’s attitude towards Confucius and Ruism at different periods; see, for example, Norman J. Girardot, *Chaojin Dongfang: Li Yage pingzhuan*, 87. It is also noteworthy that Legge did not necessarily accept all of Wang Tao’s opinions during his translation process. Reading his translations, it is clear that he deployed critical thinking when he encountered sources with differing interpretations. There has been a mushrooming of research on Leggian interpretation of the Chinese classics in recent years. For instance, see Shi Jinghuan 史靜寰 and Wang Lixin 王立新, *Jidujiao jiaoyu yu Zhongguo zhishi fenzi* 基督教教育與中國知識分子 [*Christian Education and Chinese Intellectuals*] (Fuzhou: Fujian jiaoyu chubanshe, 1998); Yue Feng 岳峰, “Guanyu Li Yage yingyi Zhongguo gujing de yanjiu zongshu: Jianlun kuaxueke yanjiu fanyi de biyaoxing 關於理雅各英譯中國古經的研究綜述: 兼論跨學科研究翻譯的必要性 [Studies on James Legge’s English Translation of Traditional Chinese Classics and Reflections on the Necessity of the Interdisciplinary Approach in Translation Studies],” *Jimei daxue xuebao* 集美大學學報, no. 2 (2004); Shi Kai 史凱, “Li Yage Zhongguo jingdian fanyi shulüe 理雅各中國經典翻譯述略 [On James Legge’s Translation of the Chinese Classics],” *Fanyi yu wenhua* 翻譯與文化, no. 3 (2015).

6 Concluding Remarks

The respective translations of *jian'ai* by Edkins and Legge, as well as their discussion of its conception, are essentially a cross-cultural reconstruction. As translators, their identity is not only informed by their role as 19th century missionary-sinologists. Their opinions on Chinese civilization and Sino-British relations as revealed in their public speeches and interactions with Chinese officials clearly reveal another function they had as members of the British intelligentsia of the Victorian era [1837–1901]. These identities constitute their cognitive background that came into play when they translated the concept of *jian'ai*. In the first half of the 20th century, other missionaries travelled to China such as Henry Raymond Williamson [1883–1966], Sverre Holth [1902–1993] and Frank Joseph Rawlinson [1871–1937]. In their respective works³⁷ can be found various translations of *jian'ai* into English which all more or less accept the interpretation of its senses of equality and universality, sometimes even using other renderings such as “undiscriminating love” or “indiscriminating love”, “impartial love” and “love without distinction”. According to the evolutionary history of the English lexicon, it can be understood that the use of the term “equal” reflects the ideological spirit of the 19th century, while after the 20th century words such as “undiscriminating” and “impartial” were usually associated with issues such as racial prejudice. It can be seen from this that the missionary-sinologists who came to China from the late Qing to the Republican Era [1912–1949] enacted interpretations based on their pre-existing system of knowledge and projected their prescriptive expectations on their reconstruction of the concept of *jian'ai*. However, due to space limitations, the author will not delve further into this complex issue, but instead wishes to explore it in a future research project.

It is also noteworthy that the most commonly used translation of *jian'ai* in the Anglosphere is “universal love”, which was popularized by Legge. This is a fact that should not be overlooked. A historical overview of the literature can reveal how the translation of *jian'ai* has been explored from the perspectives of textual understanding and theoretical reconstruction. Compared with contemporary Chinese scholar-officials, similar understandings were not expressed until the publication of *The Ideas of Mozi* [*Zimozi xueshuo* 子墨子學說] by the renowned intellectual Liang Qichao 梁啟超 [1873–1929] in 1904.

37 Henry R. Williamson, *Moti, A Chinese Heretic* (Tsinan: The University Press, 1927); Sverre Holth, *Micius: A Brief Outline of His Life and Ideas* (Shanghai: The Commercial Press, 1935); Frank Rawlinson, “The Ethical Values of Micius,” *The Chinese Recorder and Missionary Journal*, Feb (1932).

From a diachronic perspective that examines the “discovery” of the modern dimensions of Mohist thought, the author concludes that the research of the two missionary-sinologists was pioneering work³⁸ and their modern reconstruction of *jian'ai* can be considered to have been a breakthrough.

Translated by Carl Gene Fordham

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38 There is currently a trend among academics to discuss Western interpretations of Mohist doctrine. It is easier to point out their misunderstandings of Mohism and in turn ignore the ideological tendencies expressed by these studies themselves.

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The Top Ten Developments in Studies on Chinese Humanities in 2019–2020

Chinese humanities scholarship has been robust in recent years and is now going through profound changes. To keep readers abreast of these new developments and trends and to promote humanities scholarship and public awareness, since 2015, the *Journal of Literature, History, and Philosophy* [*Wen shi zhe* 文史哲] and *Chinese Reading Weekly* [*Zhonghua dushu bao* 中華讀書報] have jointly chosen the annual “Top Ten Developments in Studies on Chinese Humanities.” The selection of 2019 was delayed because of COVID-19, so this year’s selection covers both 2019 and 2020.

1 Exploration of the Seeds of National Culture and Justification of the Uniqueness of Chinese Civilization Became a Timely Project

The disciplines of history and archaeology have stepped outside the “ivory tower” and received wide attention in the past two years. The archaeological excavation of early remains of Chinese civilization and the historical inquiry into the origin of the ancient Chinese state have not only become a hot topic of academic research but also the focus of attention by all walks of life in China. The continuity and uniqueness of Chinese civilization, as well as the historical necessity of the “Chinese path,” have become the focus of many studies.

“Without the five thousand years of Chinese civilization, the flourishing path would not exist today.” The revival of historical and archaeological studies echoes the era’s need to seek answers in the past. Tracing five thousand years of Chinese history, academic endeavors in the humanities, especially history and archeology, will explore the seeds of national culture, reveal the origin and development of Chinese civilization, and justify the prosperity and longevity of Chinese cultural traditions. It is not only an academic task but also a cultural mission to enable the trajectory of Chinese civilization and the choices on the Chinese path to be adequately understood by the world, which will open up a new chapter in the study of ancient history.

Representative Publications

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- Yuan Jing 袁靖 et al. "The Rise and Fall of the Liangzhu Society from the Perspective of a Subsistence Economy 良渚文化的生業經濟與社會興衰." *Archaeology* 考古, no. 2 (2020).
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2 Engels's Unique Contributions in "Playing Second Fiddle" Was Newly Interpreted on the Bicentennial of His Birth

November 28, 2020 was the bicentennial of the birth of the great thinker [Friedrich] Engels, and research on his thinking was the focus. In response to the tendency of Western Marxism to downgrade Engels's thinking, research in China appreciates his uniquely important role in the creation, development, and dissemination of Marxism. Engels not only provided Marx with the basics of scientific exploration but also played "second fiddle" and made irreplaceably original contributions to the establishment, defense, and development of Marxism.

Engels proposed that the application of Marxism worldwide be based on an understanding of specific conditions of each country, which provided methodological guidance for the historical construction of Chinese Marxism. The thesis that “a socialist society will continually evolve” profoundly enlightens socialist thinking and reforms practice with Chinese characteristics. Engels’s reminders that “We should not revel in the victory over the natural world” and that human nature as well as human conflict must be “reconciled” also provide insights for contemporary society as it faces the crises and challenges brought about by modernity.

Representative Publications

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- Gu Hailiang 顧海良. “Two ‘Great Discoveries’ and the Essence of Marxism: Commemorating the Bicentennial of Engels’s Birth 兩個‘偉大發現’與馬克思主義思想精粹 – 紀念恩格斯誕辰 200 周年.” *Studies on Marxist Theory* 馬克思主義理論學科研究, no. 5 (2020).
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- Hou Yanshe 侯衍社. “A Study of Engels’s Later Historical Materialist Methodology 恩格斯晚年唯物史觀方法論思想研究.” *Philosophical Research* 哲學研究, no. 10 (2020).
- Li Yinghong 李映紅 and Zhao Di 趙笛. “The Value of Nature in Engels’s Ecological Holism 恩格斯生態整體主義自然價值觀探析.” *Journal of Nanjing University* 南京大學學報, no. 6 (2020).
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- Tong Jian’an 童建安 and He Zhonghua 何中華. “Differences between Marx and Engels on the Critique of the Feuerbach’s Philosophy: Comparing *The Outline of Feuerbach* with *Ludwig Feuerbach and The End of Germany Classical Philosophy* 馬克思恩格

- 斯在清算費爾巴哈哲學上的差異 – 以〈提綱〉和〈終結〉為比較物件。” *Journal of Shandong Youth University of Political Science* 山東青年政治學院學報, no. 5 (2019).
- Wang Haifeng 王海鋒. “Engels in His Later Years and the ‘Systematization’ of Marxist Philosophy: Investigation of Academic History Based on Historical Materialism 晚年恩格斯與馬克思哲學的‘體系化’ – 基於唯物史觀的學術史考察.” *Journal of Huazhong University of Science and Technology* 華中科技大學學報, no. 3 (2020).
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3 The Relationship between the Ancient and the Modern as Well as between China and the West Were Rebalanced in Commemoration of the Centennial of the May Fourth Movement

All three major ideological trends that surged in China during the twentieth century – a Marxist insurrection, total Westernization, and a return to tradition – are directly related to the May Fourth movement (1919). Evaluation of this movement has always elicited divergent opinions and even conflicts. Did an overly radical anti-traditional path in the May Fourth movement cause a crisis of Chinese consciousness, or did the remains of deeply entrenched traditions make the road to China’s modernization bumpy? The root of the above-mentioned differences lies in whether the observer’s perspective is based on “the difference between China and the West” or “the transition from antiquity to modernity.”

In 2019, the centennial of the May Fourth movement was marked with widespread commemorations. In addition to interpreting the May Fourth movement from various perspectives, academics have observed that the US-China trade

dispute continued to intensify in the twenty-first century, that the humanities are increasingly “localized” in China, and that reviving China has become a dominant theme. The question of “how to deal with tradition” and “how to deal with the West,” raised in the May Fourth era have become ever more acute and fundamental. As the Chinese society and culture struggle to achieve modernity, the historical heritage of the May Fourth movement is inevitably related to current and future ideological directions, even choices in the path for development.

Representative Publications

- Luo Zhitian 羅志田. “Bringing ‘All under Heaven’ Back in Historical Narratives: Exploring the May Fourth Movement from a New Perspective 把‘天下’帶回歷史敘述：換個視角看五四.” *Social Science Research* 社會科學研究, no. 2 (2019).
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- Zou Xiaodong 鄒曉東. “Can Confucianism Be Reconciled with ‘May Fourth’? 儒學與‘五四’能和解嗎？” *Chinese Reading Weekly* 中華讀書報, June 12, 2019, p. 13.

4 A Retrospective on the Past Seventy Years of Academic Progress and the Prospects for a Third Paradigm Shift in the Humanities

The history of humanities in twentieth-century China was determined by two paradigm shifts. The first was the shift from academia in the Republic of China [1912–1949] to academia in the People's Republic of China, and the second was the shift from focusing on issues of class to focusing on issues of modernization. The second shift, accompanied by Chinese economic reform, enabled academic research to prosper, and its development in the twenty-first century is based on its accumulation after this shift. Nonetheless, what has also appeared in academia for the purpose of correcting the partial emphasis on politics in the past is a tendency to avoid realism and almost reconstruct an ivory tower. In engaging with the world and learning from the West, some studies became overly Westernized.

On the seventieth anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China, the disciplines of literature, history, and philosophy reflected on history and envisioned the future. Only when academia is rooted in the soil of Chinese society, facing and responding to the problems of the times, will there be sustainable development, which will depend on the third shift that humanities research is experiencing: a directional shift from Westernization to Sinicization. The third shift involves the construction of a system of philosophy and social science with Chinese characteristics, making social sciences more Chinese as well as making Confucianism more scientific. This shift will bring new opportunities and challenges for the humanities in China.

Representative Publications

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Chen Xiaobin 陳曉斌. "The Awareness of Questioning and Paradigm Shifts: Seventy Years of Marxism Studies 馬克思主義哲學研究 70 年的問題意識及其範式轉換." *Journal of Sichuan University* 四川大學學報, no. 4 (2019).

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Fang Weibao 方維保. "Seventy Years of the Contemporary Novel: Shifts in the Era and Changes in Aesthetics 當代長篇小說七十年：時代潮湧與審美嬗變." *Commentaries on Literature and Art* 文藝論壇, no. 2 (2020).

- Huang Daoxuan 黃道炫. "The First Experience of Conquering Mt. Guanshan: Studies on the Past Seventy Years of Chinese Communist Revolutionary History 關山初度：七十年來的中共革命史研究." *CCP History Studies* 中共黨史研究, no. 1 (2020).
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- Zhongguo shehui kexue yuan 中國社會科學院. *Book Series in Celebration of the Seventieth Anniversary of the People's Republic of China* 中國社會科學院慶祝中華人民共和國成立 70周年書系. Beijing: China Social Sciences Press, 2019.
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5 The Prospects for Human Civilization Raised Academic Concerns over the Consensus on Western Social Values

In the history of human civilization, 2020 might be a landmark. Marked by a controversial US presidential election and a growing trend of "America opposing America," Western civilization seems to have reached a moment when a decision must be made. Based on observations in the humanities, though the perceptions of "Trumpism" and "Bidenism" vary, whether the former is regarded as right-wing populism or the latter is regarded as left-wing

radicalism, the sharp opposition and rupture between the two ideologically have been thoroughly exposed, which has created a great division in the social consensus of American society, with shock waves emanating and echoing in different corners of the world.

Because of the status of the United States in the Western world as a “beacon,” the collapse of values reflected in the fifty-ninth US presidential election will inevitably cast a shadow on the prospects for Western civilization. Through this unprecedentedly extensive dispute over core values, where Western civilization and even human civilization are headed has become an urgent and profound issue that the humanities can no longer avoid.

Representative Publications

- Cong Riyun 叢日雲. “Populism or Conservatism: On Western Intellectual Misunderstanding of the Trump Phenomenon 民粹主義還是保守主義 – 論西方知識界解釋特朗普現象的誤區.” *Exploration and Free Views* 探索與爭鳴, no. 1 (2020).
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6 The Nishan World Center for Confucian Studies Was Inaugurated in the Birthplace of Confucius with the Return of the Center for Confucian Studies to Mainland China

Since the eighteenth National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party (2012), the momentum in Confucian studies in China has become stronger. Based on the revival of folk Confucianism over thirty years, Confucianism has been clearly accepted as an important ideological resource in state governance. The inheritance and development of traditional Chinese culture have become national cultural strategies. Contrary to the time when people flocked to study Confucianism overseas in the 1980s and 1990s, world-renowned Confucian scholars who were active overseas, such as Tu Weiming, Roger T. Ames, Chung-ying Cheng, Lin Anwu, and Daniel A. Bell, have come to work in mainland China in recent years. This ended a long era in which Confucian studies were conducted in mainland China yet the centers for Confucian studies were overseas. The location of this center attracted much attention.

To facilitate the development of Confucian studies in mainland China, the Nishan World Center for Confucian Studies was officially established by the Ministry of Education and Shandong Province on August 25, 2019. Because the Nishan World Center for Confucian Studies is a physical communication platform for global Confucian studies under the guidance of the top national authority in education, its establishment can be regarded as the most ambitious and iconic measure for reviving traditional Chinese culture since the establishment of China Confucius Foundation, approved by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China in 1984. It will provide powerful support for the ideal of “making our country take initiatives in the Confucian cultural circles in East Asia, maintaining discourse power in the dissemination and research on Confucianism around the world.”

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7 Pedagogical Reform or Disciplinary System Shift? The Concept of "New Liberal Arts" Sparked Heated Discussion

The construction of new liberal arts has entered the stage of full implementation with the Declaration on the Construction of New Liberal Arts released in November 2020. But what exactly "new liberal arts" are and what is new about "new liberal arts" are questions that need to be addressed. The majority believes that constructing new liberal arts is about innovating talent training models based on the integration of technology and the humanities, but some observers point out that constructing new liberal arts is about initiating a paradigm shift in the research of liberal arts as well as adjusting the discourse system.

In fact, the concept of new liberal arts collectively refers to the disciplines of literature, history, philosophy, politics, economics, and law. It comprises half the subject territory and should not be compared with "new engineering," "new medicine," or "new agriculture." Positioning the "new liberal arts" matters for the development of Chinese academia in liberal arts. In the context of the increasing localization of the humanities in China, the building of a philosophy and social science system using Chinese experience, materials, data, traditions, and paths is a historical responsibility.

Representative Publications

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- Liu Shuguang 劉曙光. "New Liberal Arts: Thinking Mode and Academic Innovation 新文科與思維方式、學術創新." *Journal of Shanghai Jiaotong University* 上海交通大學學報, no. 2 (2020).
- Ning Qi 寧琦. "Social Demand and Core Tasks in the Construction of New Liberal Arts 社會需求與新文科建設的核心任務." *Journal of Shanghai Jiaotong University* 上海交通大學學報, no. 2 (2020).
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8 As the Concept of an "Involution" Resonated in Academia, a Low-Level Repetitive Cycle in Academic Research Remains to Be Broken

In the second half of 2020, the sociological term "involution" unexpectedly became popular online. It became a term widely used by the general public, especially favored by young people to describe their plight in daily life. The concept of involution was first proposed by the American anthropologist Clifford Geertz. Since then, historians such as Prasenjit Duara and Philip C. C. Huang have applied this concept to the study of economic history in the Ming [1368–1644] and Qing [1616–1911] dynasties to refer to "growth without development." The Chinese internet gives a new meaning to "involution": life characterized by competitiveness involving high internal friction and low innovation.

The popularity of “involution” has drawn the attention of the academic community to a similar phenomenon in current academic research. The increasing investment in research has been paradoxically accompanied by increasingly mediocre academic production. High-intensity pressure induced by employment methods such as “quantitative assessment,” “project-based survival,” and “promotion or leave” have propelled repetitive articles and even endless plagiarism. This has had negative impacts on the academic environment. Increasing academic integrity and overcoming the impasse of academic “involution” not only requires institutional support from scientific evaluation and assessment but also depends on the location and self-reflection of scholars.

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9 Differences in Prevention and Control Models between China and the West Stimulated Cultural Contemplation as the COVID Pandemic Accelerated “a Tremendous Change Unseen in a Century”

In the face of the COVID pandemic, the most serious public health emergency since the 1918 influenza pandemic, China and the West have demonstrated completely heterogeneous prevention and control models. The Chinese government and society mobilized quickly and took the lead in controlling the pandemic by virtue of strong dispatch capabilities, strict management, and rigorous control mechanisms. Western countries were less willing to mandate effective nonmedical prevention and control, which caused the pandemic to continue spreading. The differences in management models have prompted the academic community to compare the Chinese and Western models from the perspective of institutionalism and its cultural roots.

Theorists argue that China's rapid and successful handling of the pandemic showcases the advantage of China's governance system. This advantage is inseparable from the cultural and psychological roots in Confucianism. Although such Chinese cultural ideas that “everyone in the world is related” and “the community is greater than individuals” have drawbacks, they prove vital when dealing with major public emergencies. In comparison, the pandemic went out of control in the West as a result of liberalism, which prioritizes the value of individual rights. The COVID pandemic has highlighted cultural differences and consequences. Developing a deep dialogue between Chinese and Western cultures from a constructive perspective to jointly cope with the world's “tremendous change unseen in a century” calls for urgent contemplation by scholars in China and overseas.

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10 The Evaluation of Qin Shi Huang and the Qin System Made Waves Again amid Controversy over the TV Series "Qin Dynasty Epic"

In December 2020, CCTV broadcast the historical drama "Qin Dynasty Epic." As the story progressed, the initial high ratings fell, with polarizing opinions. In addition to distortions in historical details, the drama attempted to subvert the general perception of the Qin, in which "severe policies are fiercer than tigers" and "people are bitterly suffering Qin for a long time." The excessive embellishment of Qin Shi Huang's 秦始皇 [r. 246–210 BCE] victory aroused indignation by some viewers. It once again sparked discussion about the merits and demerits of the Qin dynasty [221–206 BCE] and Qin Shi Huang.

As the first "unifying" dynasty in Chinese history, the Qin dynasty established the system of counties and emperors, which formed the foundational structure of ancient Chinese states. For thousands of years, the historical significance of the Qin system and its underlying legalism have been a sensitive topic to discuss and explain. Intensive research driven by bamboo slips newly

found in recent years has deepened our understanding of the political system, government events, and everyday life in the Qin dynasty. Nevertheless, evaluation of the Qin system raises disagreement. Some believe that the Qin system cannot be understood simply as an autocratic state with imperial power, as the way it worked was rather complicated; others continue to criticize the violence of the Qin by pointing to the excessive taxes levied. The evaluation of the Qin system is expected to remain controversial.

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