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INTRODUCTION: RECONSIDERING THE *MOZI* 《墨子》

More than seventy years ago, in the first book on the *Mozi* 《墨子》 in English, Yi-pao Mei wrote:

The growing conviction through the work is that Confucianism is not the only valuable way of life that China has ever possessed and can offer, that that system has won its place of supremacy by accidental circumstances as well as intrinsic worth, and that Western attention in Chinese systems of thought has been led to distribute itself unjustly—a large amount to Confucius, a little to Laotse, and none to speak of to Motse, to mention only the three most original thinkers.¹

While interest in Chinese thought has progressed greatly since the time of Mei, the share of that interest directed toward Mozi has shifted little. Wing-tsit Chan, another great transmitter of Chinese thought, better expressed the prevailing attitude, writing in the introduction to his selections from the *Mozi*:

One thing is certain, and that is, philosophically Moism is shallow and unimportant. It does not have the profound metaphysical presuppositions of either Taoism or Confucianism. Consequently, it was only a temporary challenge to other schools, though a strong one.²

In fact, neglect of the *Mozi* is not particular to the West. With a few exceptions—Lu Sheng in the fourth century and Han Yu in the eighth, for instance—little attention was paid to the Moists from their final decline in the Han all the way into the Qing Dynasty. While the struggle around the turn of the twentieth century to find alternatives to Confucianism stimulated interest among prominent thinkers such as Liang Qichao and Hu Shi, Mozi has been largely ignored as a resource in the current contentions around the future of Chinese values in China.

The received text of the *Mozi* clearly contains elements from different times and perspectives. Aside from the core chapters and dialogues which explicate and develop the thought associated with Mozi himself, it also contains the “Neo-Moist” chapters on logic, language,

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and science, as well as a collection of chapters on engineering and the defense of cities, all of which developed out of the Moist school. While these later developments are of great interest, the essays here concentrate on the philosophy of the early Moists, and the drive behind this collection is the conviction that this philosophy remains largely underappreciated and misunderstood. Taking a phrase from Owen Flanagan, we might call these essays our contribution to a “*Mozi* Rehabilitation Project.” While Mei appeals to a sense of “intellectual chivalry” in defending an unjustly neglected thinker,³ our concern is simply that in a global philosophical dialogue, the *Mozi* has valuable things to say. Owen Flanagan’s article most directly makes this point, discussing the *Mozi* in relation to contemporary research in cognitive science, but all the essays have this concern in the background. Even the article by Weixiang Ding, which is written from the perspective of the current Confucian revival in China, fits this direction by arguing for the significance of Mozi in the formation of Confucianism itself.

Beyond uncovering what the *Mozi* has to offer philosophers today, understanding the *Mozi* is an essential element of understanding Warring States philosophy. The Moists introduced several of the core philosophical issues in early Chinese thought and they established much of the shared vocabulary. We should not forget that the philosopher who has taken Mozi the most seriously is probably Mengzi himself. Insofar as our interpretive framework fails to make sense of the power of Moism, seeing the Moists only as inept and superficial foils for the Confucians/Ru 儒, our interpretive framework is probably flawed. Thus several of the articles in this collection reconsider the *Mozi* by questioning basic aspects of this framework, particularly the relationship between the Ru and the Moists.

Dan Robins, in his article “The Moists and the Gentlemen of the World,” argues that the Moists “engaged in philosophy not to hash out issues with other philosophers but to challenge the customs and rulers of their time.” He goes on to show how approaching Moism as a movement directed toward realizing a set of social and political goals reveals their doctrines to be more moderate and plausible than commonly supposed. He applies this approach to the Moist doctrines of inclusive care, moderation, and opposition to music. In the last part of his essay, Robins argues that the Ru responded to the Moists primarily because their activism threatened custom and traditional sources of authority, and that this process of reaction eventually led to the formation of philosophical debate in China.

Weixiang Ding, in “Mengzi’s 孟子 Inheritance, Criticism, and Overcoming of Moist Thought,” also argues that the Moists had a decisive influence on the Ru, but he sees this as part of a broader controversy rooted in Mozi’s fear that the Ruist elevation of familial care would

exacerbate people's tendencies toward partiality. Ding focuses primarily on ways in which the *Mengzi* incorporates Moist elements, in particular, the appeal to objective standards (the compass and square), the taking of rightness (*yi* 義) as the center of a lifelong mission, and the use of *tian* 天 to justify the highest levels of virtue. He argues that these elements take on a new meaning as they move from Moist thought integrated around the application of objective and absolute standards into a Ruist framework structured around self-cultivation.

Franklin Perkins, in "The Moist Criticism to the Confucian Use of Fate," examines the Moist opposition to the way that fate (*ming* 命) was used by the early Ru. He shows that the Moist criticisms are rooted in a tension in the division between the internal and external, specifically the concern that applying *ming* to the external would diminish effort toward changing the material conditions of human life. The article then analyzes the Moists' position, arguing that in spite of strong statements against *ming*, they must have allowed for some limits on the efficacy of human action. The article concludes by emphasizing the importance of the different ways in which the Ru and the Moists use their accounts of *ming*, connecting the Moist criticism of *ming* to a growing awareness of the public nature of philosophical claims.

To evaluate the significance of the *Mozi*, one must first understand its basic positions. On this, the text itself is tricky. On the one hand, it clearly lays out specific teachings and policies to be promoted, even explaining which positions should be implemented under which kinds of conditions. On the other hand, this pragmatic emphasis often makes it difficult to grasp the broader philosophical views from which these practical policies emerge. As a result, there remain disagreements on some of the most basic aspects of Moist thought. Two of the articles here are directed primarily toward clarifying some of these basic positions.

Chris Fraser, in "Moism and Self-Interest," argues that the Moist theory of motivation has been largely misunderstood by being reduced to the single dimension of self-interest. He argues that the Moists view human beings as motivated by a number of factors, including a drive to emulate leaders, a tendency to reciprocate actions done to us, a desire to promote certain goods like order, unity, and filiality, and a direct motivation to promote and enact what we consider morally right (*yi*). Self-interest serves as one motivation in addition to these, and it serves as a constraint on practicability, in that a doctrine which conflicted with our self-interest would be difficult to establish and practice.

Hui-chieh Loy's article, "Justification and Debate: Thoughts on Moist Moral Epistemology," takes up another fundamental question

for interpreting the *Mozi*, the nature of the criteria used to evaluate doctrine (*yan* 言). While giving a detailed examination of the various terms used for “standard” in the *Mozi* and an analysis of the specific standards, Loy makes the broader claim that the criteria are tests for evaluating not so much whether a doctrine fits the facts but rather whether a doctrine correctly guides human behavior, that is, whether or not a doctrine recommends behavior that is morally right (*yi*). He goes on to examine how the standards function in the context of justifying doctrinal claims, emphasizing in particular that they are meant to offer a standard that is “public and impersonal and to that extent objective.”

Owen Flanagan’s article, “Moral Contagion and Logical Persuasion in the *Mozi*,” draws together many of these themes. Like Robins, Ding, and Perkins, Flanagan frames his article around the relationship between the Confucians and the Moists. He argues that the Moists point out various ways in which the Confucians fall into “performative inconsistencies,” failures to account for how their goals can be enacted under present conditions. The article centers on the role of moral emulation, arguing that taking the emulation of benevolent leaders as the main force sustaining virtue leaves the Confucians with no account of how to move out of a condition in which there are too few benevolent people to emulate. While the Moists take moral emulation as an important human motivation, they also emphasize rational persuasion, along with rewards and punishments, as ways of bringing about a situation in which there would be benevolent leaders to emulate. This account of motivation nicely extends Fraser’s argument that the Moists posit multiple sources of human motivation. The importance of rational persuasion intersects with Loy’s analysis of the Moist use of models and standards, both of which help support the claims by Robins and Perkins connecting the Moists to the transition to public philosophical discourse.

Taken together, the articles gathered here address many of the basic planks of the Moist platform. Dan Robins, Chris Fraser, and Weixiang Ding all examine the central Moist doctrine of inclusive care (*jianai* 兼愛). Robins argues that it is not as extreme as it is usually taken to be, and that it is conceived of as compatible with and even supportive of filial piety and traditional family structures; Fraser examines the motivations thought to make impartial care possible, arguing that these must go beyond self-interest; Ding, in contrast to Robins, argues that impartial care must be understood through the Moist fear that the familial partiality of the Ru would only increase contention in society. Robins discusses the Moist positions on moderation, emphasizing that they are directed toward restraining the extravagances of the elite, not toward enjoyment more generally.

Regarding the more religious doctrines of Moism, Perkins examines the opposition to appeals to fate, and Hui-chieh Loy examines the analogy between the will of *tian* as a criterion and the compass and square as used by artisans. For Moist political thought, Fraser analyzes one of the most famous arguments in the *Mozi*, the emergence of political order from the conflicts around morality in a state of nature; this account intersects Flanagan's concern with how a system of moral emulation could be first initiated. Ding emphasizes the absolutist political attitude that follows the insistence on clear standards.

We believe that this is the first collection of essays dedicated to the *Mozi* published in a European language. As such, our hope is that it will stimulate further discussion and lay a foundation for more serious consideration of the Moists. I am grateful to Professor Chung-ying Cheng, Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, for his guidance and the initial suggestion to put together a collection of articles on the *Mozi*, and to Dr. Linyu Gu, Managing Editor, who has been of great assistance at every step of the way. Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to the contributors, who made the process easy and were generous enough to comment on each other's work, a dialogue which has left its mark on many of the articles. The initial planning and foundational work for this collection was done while on a Fulbright Research Grant in affiliation with Peking University—without that opportunity, this collection would probably not have come together.

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ENDNOTES

1. Yi-pao Mei, *Motse, Rival of Confucius* (London: Arthur Probsthain, 1934), ix.
2. Wing-tsit Chan, *A Sourcebook in Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), 212.
3. Mei, *Motse, Rival of Confucius*, 183.