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MOHIST CARE

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Introduction

As the Mohist doctrine of inclusive care (*jian ai* 兼愛) is usually understood, it is an affront to both human nature and commonsense morality.¹ We are told that the Mohists rejected all particularist ties, especially to family, in the interests of a radically universalist ethic.² But love for those close to us is deeply rooted in our natures, and few would deny that this love has moral significance. If the Mohists did deny this, it would be easy to dismiss them, regardless of the abstract weight of their arguments.

But the Mohists did not deny this. They consistently took it for granted that we have special attitudes and obligations toward those close to us. Filial piety was one of their core values, and this is nowhere more evident than in their writings on inclusive care. Whatever they were doing when they argued that people should care for one another inclusively, they were not, or at any rate did not take themselves to be, saying that we should abandon all particularist attachments.

Nonetheless, the Mohists do seem to say that we should care equally for all others. Working out what they might have meant is the main business of this essay. I argue that care, for the Mohists, involves recognizing that someone's well-being has moral and political significance not just for oneself but for people generally. Those who care inclusively would express their care by committing themselves to collective norms. These norms would be grounded equally in the well-being of all, but would not call for impartial feeling or behavior. So understood, inclusive care is compatible with a wide range of particularist ties. Indeed, given the Mohists' other values, it is inconceivable without such ties.

Jian Ai 兼愛 (Inclusive Care)

The *Mozi* contains three books, together called a triad, devoted to *jian ai*, namely books 14, 15, and 16. The authors of these books likely did not take themselves to be defending an attitude called *jian ai*: this expression occurs only once in the three books, as a verb phrase meaning "care for everybody," in an account of the reign of King Wen (16:175/93).³ Later scholars privilege this expression largely because it is used to title the three books (but we do not know who gave the books their titles), and because it occurs in a list of the Mohists' core doctrines elsewhere in the *Mozi* (49:722–723/251). (The use of the expression in sections 3B/9 and 7A/26 of the *Mencius* has probably also been influential.)

The formulations that the Mohists actually adopted differ from one another in important ways. Sometimes they wrote simply of *ai*-ing others, or other lineages, or

other states. Often they included the word *xiang* 相 (one another), implying reciprocity; this is especially common in books 14 and 15. Statements about *ai* often occur alongside parallel statements about *li* 利 (benefiting) in books 15 and 16. Book 16 often drops explicit reference to *ai*, advocating an attitude it calls simply *jian*, though the Mohists certainly took this to be a kind of *ai*.

There is an emerging consensus that the three books devoted to *jian ai* were written in the order in which they now appear in the *Mozi*.⁴ The Mohists' changing formulations likely reflect, in part, changes in their understanding of their doctrine. Two points are especially important. First, book 14 seems to have been written before the Mohists adopted *li* 利 (benefit) as an umbrella term covering all their core values; it uses the word only to criticize attempts to harm others in order to benefit one's own. Thus, its formulations do not explicitly relate caring for others to benefiting others, and instead of resting its arguments on the distinction between benefit and harm, as books 15 and 16 do, it appeals to social order (*zhi* 治).⁵ Second, the formulations used in book 16 emphasize reciprocity much less than do those in books 14 and 15. This likely reflects the Mohists' growing awareness that their doctrine required people to care for others even in situations that did not allow for reciprocity.⁶ We thus find both conceptual and doctrinal developments over the course of the three books.

I shall nonetheless often write simply of inclusive care, or *jian ai*, as if the Mohists consistently advocated a single attitude despite their changing formulations. To a large extent I think this is correct. Though the Mohists came to acknowledge further consequences of their core doctrine, this did not change their conception of *jian ai* in any fundamental way. And even if it did change significantly, "*jian ai*" captures what all the Mohists' formulations have in common: a concern with *ai* and its proper scope.

But what do these words mean?

In Warring States China, *ai* was generally understood to be a form of concern. In one sense, to *ai* something was to be sparing with it, and the concern was for oneself.⁷ But more often, to *ai* someone was to be concerned for her, and specifically for her well-being. The word *ai* is often translated into English as "love," implying that *ai* always involved intense emotion, but early Chinese usage does not bear out this implication; *ai* could, but need not, be loving.⁸ In fact it could be entirely behavioral.⁹ The English word "care" shares much of this range, which is why I adopt it as my translation for *ai*.¹⁰

The Mohists advocated *ai* that is *jian* 兼. *Jian* most often had the force of a universal quantifier, and as a verb phrase *jian ai* is naturally translated as "care for all." However, the Mohists also used *jian* as an adjective and as a noun, so we need a translation with more grammatical range. As a verb, *jian* meant *to combine*, *to unite*; in book 16, the Mohists contrast *jian* with *bie* 別 (to separate off).¹¹ This may imply that to *jian ai* is not simply to care for all, but is rather to care for all without distinguishing among them; this is what motivates the formulation "care has no grades or levels" (愛無差等) in section 3A/5 of the *Mencius*, for example. Accordingly, some scholars translate *jian* in this context as "impartial" (Van Norden) or "indiscriminate" (Shun).¹² I prefer "inclusive" because it stays closer to the usual verbal sense of *jian*

and allows a natural contrast with *bie* (excluding). I also doubt that *jian* so clearly implies impartiality.¹³

The Mohists contrast *jian ai* with hating others and with *bie*. Though some scholars take the Mohists to be objecting to an attitude they call *bie ai*, this expression occurs nowhere in the *Mozi*; excluding is an absence of care, not a kind of care.¹⁴ Both hatred and *bie* involve an unwillingness to help others and a willingness to harm them. Clearly there are attitudes intermediate between care on the one hand and hatred and *bie* on the other. As is often noted, by considering only these two options the Mohists risk depending on a false dichotomy.

In any case, I shall henceforth translate *jian ai* as “inclusive care,” and shall take this to be the name of the doctrine defended in books 14 to 16 of the *Mozi*.

The Core Argument for Inclusive Care

Each book in the “Inclusive Care” triad begins with a version of what I shall call the Mohists’ core argument for inclusive care (14: 151–152/78–80, 15: 155–156/81–82, 16: 172–173/87–89). This argument makes up the whole of book 14; books 15 and 16 supplement it with replies to objections.

The core argument begins by describing people who devote themselves to promoting what benefits the world. In book 14, these are the sages, and in books 15 and 16 they are the benevolent. Then the Mohists cite a series of harms, and claim that they all derive from a lack of care; which harms they cite and the order in which they cite them differs from book to book. The Mohists then describe what they claim would be the results of people caring appropriately for one another. In books 14 and 15, the Mohists list essentially the same harms that they identified earlier, and claim that they would be eliminated. At this point, book 16 ignores most of these harms, but then also claims that if people were inclusive, various additional benefits would follow. The core argument concludes by describing a society in which people care inclusively. These are the only passages that explicitly characterize inclusive care as an impartial attitude.

The core argument is consequentialist in form, appealing to the consequences that, the Mohists claim, would follow if people cared inclusively.¹⁵ The Mohists do not assume total compliance: even when imagining a state run by a sage-king, they accept a need for punishment (see, e.g., 16: 176/94). But it is clear that this is the exception, and that they are appealing to the benefits of widespread compliance. This does not render the implied consequentialism indirect. The Mohists are not arguing that the right thing to do is what a person with the right attitudes would do or that the right attitudes for an individual to have are the attitudes that, if sufficiently widespread, would have the best consequences. They focus entirely on the question of which attitudes should be widespread. (A consequence of this focus is that their arguments have no straightforward implications for what attitudes a person should have if inclusive care is not widespread, and this will be important in the next section, “Other People’s Care.”)

The considerations that the Mohists appeal to in the core argument fall into three broad groups. First, it is harmful if people injure one another. Book 14 mentions as

instances of this sort of harm violence between states and lineages, and burglary and banditry among people more generally. Books 15 and 16 add cases of people taking advantage of other people's vulnerabilities, such as the strong preying on the weak or the clever cheating the stupid. The Mohists' most straightforward argument for inclusive care is that it would prevent these harms.

Second, the Mohists count the lack of certain virtues as harmful. These are the virtues that are appropriate to role-governed relationships, virtues such as filial piety, a father's or ruler's beneficence (*ci* 慈), and loyalty; I shall call them relational virtues. Inclusive care, the Mohists claim, would promote these virtues.

Third, book 16 claims that widespread inclusiveness would give rise to a general practice of mutual aid. Here is what it says:

If now we are to correctly seek what benefits the world and choose it, we will take inclusiveness to be correct. By this means discerning ears and bright eyes will see and hear for one another! By this means legs and arms will become strong and will move for one another! And those with ways will teach one another. By this means the old without wives will be taken care of until they reach the end of their lives and the weak and orphaned without parents will be supported as they grow up. (16:173/89)¹⁶

The implied argument is that inclusive care would benefit by motivating the talented and knowledgeable to provide guidance to those less fortunate, and by ensuring that those without the support of a family are not in need.

The main puzzle here is why the Mohists considered the lack of a relational virtue harmful. Book 14 tells us that unfilial sons "care for themselves but do not care for their fathers, so they injure their fathers to benefit themselves" (similar claims follow about fathers, younger and older brothers, and subjects and rulers). This may imply that the lack of a relational virtue is harmful because of a consequent willingness to injure others. Another possibility is that the Mohists thought that the lack of relational virtues was a harm independent of any consequences; certainly no other text in the *Mozhi* (including the parallel passages in books 15 and 16) implies that the relational virtues have value because they prevent injury. Perhaps the authors of book 14 assumed that a son's lack of filial piety itself constitutes an injury to his father, and thus that a son's filial piety is constitutive of his father's well-being. This would explain why the Mohists associate care so closely with the relational virtues, even though they incorporate attitudes (such as deference and respect) that we would not normally think of as care: caring people would want to have these attitudes because of how they contribute to the well-being of those close to them.¹⁷

The strength of the core argument depends on how much it was meant to establish. Many scholars hold that the Mohists were trying to show that we should be utterly impartial in our dealings with others, and give no special preference to kin.¹⁸ This makes the core argument extremely ambitious. How ambitious it would be depends on what the Mohists saw as replacing family ties. Presumably they would still expect us to concern ourselves primarily with the well-being of others within certain in-groups. However, these in-groups would have to be instituted so that their members would not form particularist attachments to one another (perhaps this could be accomplished to some extent by having people regularly move between in-groups).

The core argument manifestly fails to show that such in-groups would do a better job of securing people's well-being than do families. But there is no reason to think it was intended to show that. Nothing in the *Mozhi* sets out institutions that could replace the family without giving rise to particularist attachments, or denies the importance of family ties. The core argument is itself premised on the value of filial piety and other family virtues, and this rules out any attempt to replace the family with an alternative institution, or to condemn special preferences for kin.

If we attend to the particular harms and benefits the Mohists appealed to in the core argument, we can see that their aims were relatively modest. At the heart of their view was the conviction that we should not harm one another, and that we should be virtuous in the performance of our various relational roles. Book 16 adds the requirement that we do our part in a general practice of mutual aid. Unfortunately it does not tell us how much this would require us to do for strangers, but in a world of people who care inclusively this work would be shared and probably would not often place a great burden on individuals. And even this passage takes it for granted that most people's needs will normally be taken care of in the context of traditional social institutions, treating the situation of old people and children without families as exceptional. Some might be wary of the requirement that we share our talents with others, but this requirement is only to be expected in a philosophy whose core value is the benefit of all the world's people, and it would hardly tear families apart.

The Mohists' conception of inclusive care is well expressed in a formula that they adopt in book 15, where it occurs six times (it also occurs three times in book 16): "care for one another inclusively, benefit one another in interaction (兼相愛，交相利)." This makes it explicit that inclusive care does not imply inclusive benefiting, though this has often been missed by scholars who interpret *jiao xiang li* 交相利 (interacting, benefit one another) simply as "mutual aid."¹⁹ What these scholars miss is the significance of the *jiao* 交 (interact): it parallels the *jian* 兼 (inclusive) in *jian xiang ai* 兼相愛 (inclusively, care for one another), and most likely indicates the scope of the mutual aid that the Mohists advocated, just as the *jian* indicates the scope of the mutual care that they advocated. The maxim thus says that we should care for everybody, and should benefit those people we interact with. An obvious consequence is that we do not benefit everybody we care for (though we would benefit them if we ever did interact with them).²⁰ Whom we benefit is determined by our interactions, and the Mohists sensibly assume that we interact with others primarily in the context of traditional social institutions, especially the family.

The Mohists nonetheless present inclusive care as an impartial attitude. This may be implicit in their choice of the word *jian* and is explicit in the concluding sections in all three versions of the core argument. Here is the passage from book 15:

Master Mozi proclaimed: "See others' states as (*ruo* 若) one sees one's own state. See others' lineages as one sees one's own lineage. See others' persons as one sees one's own person." For this reason, if the various lords care for one another they will not war in the fields; if lineage heads care for one another they will not usurp one another; if people care for one another they will not rob one another; if ruler and minister care for one another they will be gracious and loyal; if father and son care for one another they will be

beneficent and filial; if elder and younger brother care for one another they will be harmonious; and if the world's people all care for one another, the strong will not seize the weak, the many will not plunder the few, the rich will not humiliate the poor, the noble will not lord it over the base, and the cunning will not cheat the stupid. (15:156/82)

The passage in book 14 makes similar claims, using the same metaphor of seeing; it also speaks more literally of people caring for others as they care for themselves (14:152/79–80). The parallel passage in book 16 says that we should be for (*wei* 為) other people's states, cities, and lineages as we are for our own (16:172/88). Xu Zongxing has argued that if the Mohists had wanted to call for impartial care, they would have used the word *tong* 同 (same, similar) rather than *ruo* 若 (as, like) here, and that the Mohists thought our regard for others should be similar to, but still less than, our regard for ourselves.²¹ I doubt that the Mohists' use of *ruo* allows this reading, however, and take these passages to be advocating an impartial attitude.

This cannot mean that the Mohists are ruling out all forms of partiality. These very passages continue to insist on the relational virtues and the institutions that require them. For example, the passage from book 14 asks, "If they saw their fathers, older brothers, and rulers as they do their own persons, how could they practice unfiliality?" The passage from book 15 similarly emphasizes the relational virtues. And the passage in book 16 takes for granted our allegiance to particular lineages, cities, and states. The passages therefore cannot be advocating a form of impartiality that would be incompatible with virtues such as filial piety that are inevitably partial. Assuming that the Mohists were not just engaging in exaggerated rhetoric, and that they really were describing inclusive care as an impartial attitude, they must nonetheless have thought it was compatible with other, partial attitudes. (I try to explain why they might have thought this in the section below on "Mohist Care.")

The assumption that the Mohists intended to rule out any preference for kin is so ingrained that it is probably worth dwelling briefly on their actual attitudes toward family. Book 9 tells us that in the absence of properly administered rewards and punishments, people will not be filial toward their parents (9:75/40). Books 11 and 12 treat it as a significant harm if families are driven apart by normative disagreement (11:107/55, 12:114/59). Book 16's call for mutual aid assumes that most of us will enjoy the support of a family, treating the situation of widowers and orphans as exceptional (16:173/89). The same book closes with words emphasizing the value of being "a gracious ruler, a loyal subject, a beneficent father, a filial son, a supportive (*you* 友) older brother, or a fraternal younger brother" (16:117/97). Books 18 and 25 take the filial son as a model in arguing, respectively, against war and for moderation in funerals (18:200/103–104, 25:257/122). Books 27 and 28 say that heaven wants us to care inclusively for one another, and that if (and only if) we do this then male family members will be beneficent and filial toward one another (27:297–298/142–143, 28:314–315/155–156).²² Book 31 takes the lack of familial virtues to be at the heart of the age's disorder (31:330/160). The same book argues that in sacrificing to ancestral ghosts we are serving our parents (31:337/173). Book 35 argues that the teachings of the fatalists would undermine the familial virtues, which flourished under the rule of the sage-kings (35:395–396/185–186). Books 36 and 37 tell us that

the sage-kings promoted filial piety (36:406–407/190, 37:416/194). Book 39 (“Against the *Ru*”) actually criticizes the *ru* (or Confucians) for their lack of filial piety on the grounds that they elevate their wives and eldest sons to the status of their parents (39:428, 429/200, 201).²³

In short, filial piety and other relational virtues were core Mohist values. And the Mohists never tried to ground them in anything more fundamental. They did not, for example, defend relational virtues by arguing that being virtuous in our roles promotes the benefit of all, with benefit understood independently of the relational virtues. Quite the contrary, they built the relational virtues into their conception of benefit.²⁴

And if inclusive care ruled out preference for kin because it required us to treat all others the same way, then presumably it would also rule out other forms of differential treatment. But this is obviously inconsistent with the Mohists’ political theory, which required that we conform upward (but not downward) and that the virtuous and competent be attracted to positions of power with material and social rewards not available to most. It is also inconsistent with the Mohists’ commitment to what they called the separation of men and women (男女之別), which assigned women to an inner, domestic sphere and men to an outer sphere responsible for agriculture, war, and the exercise of political power. To the extent that this separation was distinct from the relational virtues, the Mohists also made it fundamental to their conception of social order, as when book 21 requires that palace walls be designed to separate the women from the men (21:250–251/122).²⁵

The Mohists do worry that excessive care for those close to us might lead us into conflict with others. For example, they mention great men who care only for their own lineage and thus disrupt other lineages in order to benefit their own (14:152/79). More generally, when they object to people’s lack of care, it is extremely unlikely that they meant to imply that people care only for themselves. More likely they recognized it as a general problem that people tend to care too much for those close to them, and not enough, or not at all, for strangers. But this hardly implies that they discounted the value of family, or denied that it calls for partial behavior and attitudes. All the Mohists needed to claim, and all they appear to have claimed, is that our care for those close to us can be excessive, relative to our care for others. They do not even seem to have conceived of this as an excess of filial piety, as if filial piety, properly understood, could not lead to conflict with other families. (They defend this view in their response to the objection from filial piety, which I discuss in the section below on “Other People’s Care.”)

Thus, throughout the *Mozi*, and especially in the “Inclusive Care” triad, we find a commitment to the relational virtues and to differential treatment more generally. The widespread view that the Mohists intended their doctrine of inclusive care to rule these out is certainly false. And this implies that the aims of the argument were relatively modest; certainly there is little if anything in their view that runs contrary to today’s moral common sense. There is also little if anything in it that runs contrary to *ru* moral philosophy.²⁶ The Mohists’ evident commitment to family and to the relational virtues refutes the widespread view that the doctrine of inclusive care put them deeply at odds with *ru* familism.

It is thus significant that nothing in the “Inclusive Care” triad implies that the Mohists took themselves to be disagreeing with the *ru* (or any other philosophers) over inclusive care. Their arguments address the actual behavior and attitudes that they saw as leading to disorder and harm, and when they addressed objections they attributed the objections to precisely those elites whose own lack of care most concerned them, namely the gentlemen and officers of the world. There is no warrant for the common assumption that these are veiled references to the *ru*. The *ru* may have idealized and identified with the gentlemen of the world, but this does not make the Mohists’ references to gentlemen implicit references to the *ru*.²⁷ And in no existing text do the Mohists criticize the *ru* for failing to care inclusively.²⁸ On the contrary, in book 39 (“Against the *Ru*”) they argue that *ru* traditions wrongly elevate wives and eldest sons to the level of parents. Ironically, this takes the *ru* to task for treating people the same who (according to the Mohists) should be treated differently, given the relationships in question. This is striking confirmation of the fact that the Mohists did not endorse total impartiality, and also that they did not see the *ru* as opponents of the doctrine of inclusive care.

Other People’s Care

In books 15 and 16 the Mohists respond to six objections to inclusive care.²⁹ Four of the five objections that the Mohists explicitly quote acknowledge that inclusive care is good (*shan* 善) or morally correct (*renyi* 仁義).³⁰ The issues that the Mohists treat are practical: their aim is to show that people can in fact care for one another inclusively.

Both books address the charge that inclusive care is impossible (15 : 157–158/84–86, 16 : 175–176/92–94). The Mohists respond by listing sage-kings and describing their government. This only gets them so far, given that most people are not sages, so the Mohists must also respond to the objection that inclusive care is too difficult (15 : 156–157/83–84, 16 : 177/95–97). They take this objection to raise two issues; as book 15 puts it, these are the benefits (*li* 利) and the causes (*gu* 故) of inclusive care. The Mohists address the second issue by saying that if rulers practice and encourage inclusive care, then their people will also come to care inclusively; their argument is that previous rulers have successfully promoted attitudes and behavior more difficult than inclusive care. To demonstrate the benefits of inclusive care, the Mohists appeal to the possibility of benefiting from other people’s care, and it is this appeal that I take up in this section and the next.

The possibility of benefiting from other people’s care is implicit in the Mohists’ whole approach to inclusive care, for their doctrine calls for people throughout the world to care inclusively: no one is being asked to deal regularly with people who do not care back. And the Mohists’ language throughout books 14 and 15 makes it clear that what the Mohists are advocating there is mutual care: they call for people to care for one another (*xiang ai* 相愛) or to care for one another inclusively (*jian xiang ai* 兼相愛), not simply to care inclusively or to care for others.³¹ But it is in their attempts to show that inclusive care would not be difficult that their appeals to the possibility

of benefiting from other people's care tell us the most about the nature of inclusive care.

The Mohists' aim in these arguments is to show that inclusive care makes sense given people's existing desires for things to go well for themselves and their families. For these arguments to succeed, the Mohists need not show that caring inclusively would maximize benefit for individuals or their families. The core argument has already given a moral justification for inclusive care, and the Mohists regularly take it for granted that people care about what is right. What matters here is that if inclusive care were regularly and seriously at odds with people's existing practical interests, then they would be unlikely to care inclusively even if they recognized that inclusiveness is right. The Mohists must therefore show that, in practical terms, we would not be crazy to care inclusively. I will summarize this point by saying that the Mohists needed to show that inclusive care makes practical sense.

Book 15 treats this issue briefly in the course of its response to the objection from difficulty (15:156–158/83–86). Though the bulk of the response is given over to the argument that rulers can successfully promote inclusive care, the Mohists twice say that when we tend to care for and benefit others, others tend to care for and benefit us (15:156,157/83,84). This could be read as an appeal to reciprocity, though the Mohists do not explicitly say that we tend to care for and benefit precisely those others who tend to care for and benefit us (the Chinese reads “愛人者，人必從而愛之”³²). Either way, the point is that inclusive care makes practical sense because if you care for others then you will be able to benefit from other people's care.

This argument does not require that people reliably repay care with an equivalent degree of care, and the Mohists cannot have thought that we do: if we did, then how we treat others would be determined entirely by how they treat us, and not at all by our own care. The Mohists' view must have been that we treat people better, and come to care for them more, if they treat others well and care for them, but also that we treat them better if we already care for them.

Book 16's response to the objection from difficulty focuses entirely on the ruler's ability to promote inclusiveness (16:177/95–97). (It does twice invoke reciprocity with the phrase “caring for one another inclusively, benefiting one another in interaction”). In this book the Mohists make their appeal to the possibility of benefiting from other people's care in response to two new objections, an objection from usability (which I take up in the next section) and an objection from filial piety. Both of these objections raise the question of whether inclusive care makes practical sense from the point of view of an individual and his or her family. It is interesting and likely significant that the Mohists distinguish this from the issue of difficulty. The real difficulty, they perhaps thought, lay in bringing about the collective transformation that would make inclusive care a widespread attitude. Given that transformation, and the resulting opportunities to benefit from other people's care, individuals would not face undue burdens in caring inclusively.

The objection from filial piety is that inclusiveness will interfere with the practice of filial piety by undermining one's devotion to what benefits one's parents (16:176–177/95). In response, the Mohists set out a piece of practical reasoning: a filial son wants other people to care for and benefit his parents; other people will care for and

benefit his parents only if he cares for and benefits their parents; so if he is not stupid he will care for and benefit other people's parents. (The Mohists make it explicit here, as they do not in book 15, that other people's care will *bao* 報, or repay, one's own.) The aim here is not to justify inclusive care; the Mohists have already given their justification in the core argument. And neither is their point that a filial son could begin caring for non-kin as a result of reasoning such as this, or that this reasoning could constitute a filial son's only motivation for being inclusive.³³ The aim of the passage is to reconcile inclusiveness with filial interests, and the reasoning that the Mohists set out does a much better job of doing that than it ever could of getting someone to start caring for non-kin. Presumably it matters to sons who are both filial and inclusive that their inclusiveness will benefit their parents, just as it presumably matters to them that in benefiting their parents they are doing their part in ensuring the well-being of all people. But the Mohists need not and do not say that their desire to benefit their parents fully explains either why they became inclusive in the first place or why they continue to be inclusive.

The Mohists also do not need to claim that being inclusive would maximize benefit for one's parents. They do appear to presuppose this claim when they conclude that only a stupid filial son would not be inclusive. And this claim probably does follow if the only possibilities are caring for others and hating them, as the Mohists' argument appears to assume. But being inclusive would not always motivate acting in one's parents' best interests, even granted an enlightened understanding of those interests. If the Mohists had taken into account a fuller range of possibilities they would have been forced to admit this. But admitting this would not have undermined the argument they really needed to make. To answer the objection they quote, they had only to show that being inclusive would not conflict with one's parents' interests to such an extent that it would be an affront to filial piety, and filial piety does not require maximizing benefit for one's parents. This more modest conclusion would be plausible, especially given that in a world of people who care inclusively those whose parents are most in need would receive more help from others and would be called on to provide less help to others.

The last point raises an issue that the Mohists do not sufficiently address. Under conditions of near equality, it is often reasonable to count on reciprocity. However, and as the Mohists increasingly recognized, inclusiveness would also require a willingness to care for others under unequal conditions. In book 14, the core argument mentions unequal relationships only within the family and the state, and does not explicitly note their unequal nature (14:151–152/78–80). Book 15 adds relations between the strong and the weak, the rich and the poor, the noble and the common, and the wise and the stupid (15:155–156/81–82). Book 16 leaves out the rich and the poor, and adds relationships between the many and the few, great states and minor ones, and great lineages and minor ones; it also calls for a general practice of mutual aid in which the relatively advantaged would help those less fortunate (16:172–173/87–89).

The more powerful or advantaged people are, the less likely they are to worry about whether those less fortunate care for them, and the less likely they are to be moved by appeals to reciprocity. At the same time, inclusive care places more

demands on the powerful and advantaged: they must forgo opportunities to exploit those more vulnerable than they are and they must do more to help others, and those with political power are also expected to promote inclusive care to those over whom they rule.³⁴ Rulers in particular would have to actively promote the well-being of all their people, and the Mohists recognized that this could conflict with their more particularist loyalties.³⁵ The Mohists could still hope that such people would be moved by other considerations. In some contexts (especially within the family) those with more power will often already care for those with less. And, as the Mohists recognized, people can also be moved by their conception of what is right or by religious belief. But the Mohists were intent on showing that inclusive care would make practical sense, and seem to have accepted that many people would not be inclusive if they did not recognize this. Their failure to extend this argument explicitly to address those with great power or advantage is thus a serious worry.

The Caretaker Argument

Two more arguments in book 16 appeal to the possibility of benefiting from other people's care: the caretaker and ruler arguments.³⁶ The caretaker argument in particular has much to tell us about how the Mohists conceived of inclusive care, and I shall treat it at length.

The caretaker argument responds to the objection that though inclusiveness is good, it cannot be used (*yong* 用). In the subsequent argument the Mohists once again take the issue to be whether being inclusive makes practical sense. The argument posits two officers, one inclusive and one who excludes. The inclusive one holds up the ideal of a high officer who "must be for his friends' persons as he is for his own person and for his friends' families as he is for his own family"; the excluding officer rejects this attitude. Accordingly, the inclusive officer is and the excluding one is not willing to feed friends when they are hungry, clothe them when they are cold, take care of them when they are ill, and bury them when they die. No doubt the Mohists considered the inclusive officer's ideal of friendship intrinsically appealing, but that is not the main point of the Mohists' argument. They ask us to decide which of the two officers we would entrust our families to if we had to leave them for an extended period. "In situations like this," the Mohists write, "the world has no stupid husbands or stupid wives; even people who reject inclusiveness will entrust them to the one who is inclusive." The Mohists then accuse those who reject inclusiveness of letting their words and actions go to waste (*fei* 費). This expression echoes the concern with showing that inclusiveness can be used, and presumably means that there is something wrong with not acting according to the views one publicly advocates. The argument in short is that inclusiveness can be used because if other people are inclusive you will be able to benefit from their inclusiveness.³⁷

It is not often recognized that the caretaker argument takes it for granted that the inclusive officer will not concern himself impartially with the well-being of all people. Indeed, Bryan Van Norden has objected to the argument on the grounds that an inclusive officer would care for strangers as much as for my family, so I would be

better off entrusting my family to someone who cares more for his family than for mine, but more for my family than for strangers.³⁸ But the inclusive officer described in this passage does not concern himself impartially with the well-being of all people. The whole argument takes it for granted that in the normal case people's needs will largely be taken care of within their families. The argument also assumes that the inclusive officer is willing to take care of my family only if I actually put them in his care. If I simply abandon them, or put them in the care of someone who will neglect them, the inclusive officer cannot be counted on to take care of them.³⁹ Otherwise, I would have no reason actually to entrust them to the inclusive officer in the situation described other than convenience, and the Mohists are not appealing to convenience.

We might expect the Mohists to unpack this argument by talking about agreements, or even contracts, but instead they write of a relationship they call *you* 友, or friendship. The Mohists belabor the attitudes the two officers take toward their friends and their friends' families, and the ways they treat them. And the ways they treat their friends and their friends' families are precisely the way they will treat my family if I put the latter in their care. For example, the inclusive officer will feed my family when they are hungry if, but also only if, I entrust them to him. In the scenario the Mohists present, then, I establish a friendship with the officer to whom I entrust my family, and it is because of this friendship that the inclusive officer will care for them.

The parallel ruler argument confirms the role that friendship plays in the caretaker argument (16:174–175/91–92). This sets up a choice between an inclusive ruler and an excluding one: which would we choose to rule over us in a time of pestilence? The two rulers talk about their people in almost exactly the same terms as the two officers talk about their friends.⁴⁰ But a ruler's relation to his people is obviously established only when he actually becomes their ruler. And similarly, it seems, with friendship: we must become friends before the inclusive officer will take care of my family.

This perhaps sounds odder than it should, given my decision to follow standard practice and translate *you* 友 as “friend”; “associate” would perhaps be closer to the Mohists' meaning. As it was understood in Warring States China, *you* was a relationship entered into freely, implying social equality. The associated virtue was *xin* 信, or trustworthiness, as in sections 3A/4 and 4A/12 of the *Mencius*: a true friend was someone you could count on. Sometimes *you* is given as a virtue, especially of older brothers; a *you* older brother is supportive, not (in familiar terms) friendly.⁴¹ Within the caretaker argument, there is no suggestion that the inclusive officer's support of his friends is reciprocated, but *you* would often call for mutual support and thus mutual trust, often in the context of a joint endeavor. Plausibly any association for a common purpose in which parties were expected to concern themselves with one another's well-being could count as *you*.⁴²

The caretaker and ruler arguments present us with extreme cases: the choice of someone to take care of our families for an extended period, and the choice of a ruler at a time when the world is overrun by pestilence. However, the arguments place a great deal of weight on how the two officers treat their friends and how the

two rulers treat their people, and it is hard to believe they are not appealing to the benefits of having inclusive friends and an inclusive ruler quite generally.⁴³ And it is certainly not only in extreme cases that we benefit from friends' willingness to help us out or would benefit from a caring ruler. Most likely, the Mohists' arguments are just as general as were their conceptions of friendship and rulership: they are arguing that inclusiveness is useful because it makes genuine friendship and caring rulership possible.⁴⁴

The caretaker argument thus recognizes the need for beneficial interactions not structured by institutions as entrenched as the lineage and the state; it adds depth to the maxim that we care for one another inclusively and benefit one another in interaction.⁴⁵ We cannot know whether the Mohists saw this sort of interaction as sustaining the general practice of mutual aid that they call for in book 16, though this is an appealing conjecture. If it is right, the Mohists thought that in general inclusive care leads people to benefit others in the context of particular relationships, albeit sometimes relatively *ad hoc* ones. Even if not, both passages recognize that in order to secure the well-being of all, people must sometimes be willing to come to the aid of strangers, and not just of those with whom they share significant lineage or political ties.

But the main point of the caretaker argument is that inclusiveness is useful because it makes genuine friendship possible. This is a powerful argument. Having caring friends often does benefit us, and likely also often benefited the Mohists' contemporaries, and this provides a clear sense in which genuine friendship is useful. But what was this intended to show?

The opening of the argument suggests that it targets people who recognize that inclusiveness is good, but who want assurance that they can get something out of it: once again the Mohists set themselves the task of showing that inclusiveness makes practical sense. They need not show that it serves one's interests and the interests of one's family better than would any other attitude. Their argument will succeed if we would benefit from inclusive friendship often enough that being inclusive ourselves would not seem like too much of a burden. As with the arguments discussed in the previous section, this one will have less force against people who rely less often on the assistance of friends. But for most of us it does indeed have considerable force.

The statements that conclude the caretaker argument suggest that the Mohists also had a second aim in mind. The Mohists claim that even those who reject inclusiveness would prefer to benefit from other people's inclusiveness, and they take this to be a reason not to reject inclusiveness. The issue here is not the objector's actual attitudes, but the attitudes he publicly advocates (though the Mohists may be assuming that it would be wrong to hold an attitude that one is unwilling to advocate publicly⁴⁶). The argument is simply that it makes no sense to advocate an attitude that you would actually prefer others not to have.

Neither aim requires the Mohists to show that inclusiveness is right or that it best serves our interests or the interests of our families.⁴⁷ They thus evade one common objection: that though they provide us with a reason to want other people to be inclusive, they do not provide us with a reason to be inclusive ourselves. Another ob-

jection, that they argue from a false dichotomy since they only consider an inclusive officer and an excluding one, is relevant only to the Mohists' second apparent aim. Pursuing the first aim, they could take it for granted that the objector recognizes that inclusiveness is good; contrasting the two officers serves only to make it more vivid how much we would benefit from inclusive friends. But to the extent that they were trying to convince us not to reject inclusiveness, they committed themselves to defending inclusiveness against whatever attitudes their opponents actually promoted. Since it is unlikely that their opponents all promoted exclusion, the caretaker argument does depend on a false dichotomy insofar as it pursues this second aim. Perhaps this is a reason to conclude (what is, anyway, plausible) that this second aim was secondary: the main aim of the caretaker argument was to show that inclusiveness makes practical sense.

The Mohists are thus best read, both here and in the arguments discussed in the previous section, as arguing that a desire to benefit oneself and one's family is compatible with inclusive care. They assume that such desires are not so strong that we inevitably do whatever maximizes our own and our families' benefit, and then argue in effect that though such desires might conflict with more extreme sorts of altruism, they are compatible with inclusive care. This does not require them to claim that desires for benefit on their own could motivate inclusiveness. All the Mohists need to show is that inclusive care would not disappoint such desires so regularly that it would make unrealistic demands on us.

These conclusions entail that inclusive care would not be a pure other-regarding attitude, for even if self-interest and the interests of one's family do not directly motivate inclusive care, the expectation that they will be served remains essential to the psychology of the inclusive agent. This has sometimes provoked objections from scholars sympathetic to *ru* moral philosophy, on the grounds that it taints virtue with a concern for self-interest.⁴⁸ But actually it reflects two important insights: that in a world of people who do care for one another inclusively there is no need for most people to have purer other-regarding attitudes, and that there is no hope of bringing about a world in which most people's other-regarding attitudes are free of concern for self-interest.

Conditional Care

The Mohists explain why inclusive care will not be overly difficult by appealing to the possibility of benefiting from other people's care. Granted that enough other people do also care, the Mohists' claims are plausible. If enough other people are generous in reciprocating one's care, and if one can form mutually beneficial friendships with them, it will be easy to feel that one's care for others does not amount to simple self-sacrifice. This will certainly make it easier to sustain caring attitudes.

This implies that it would not be so easy to sustain caring attitudes without the support of other people's care. The less one could rely on other people's care, the closer one's own care would have to approach pure altruism. But few of us are

capable of sustained altruism, so, forced to deal regularly with people who do not care, many of us would (perhaps against our will) find our own care diminishing, and this would in turn make it harder for others to sustain their care. Inclusive care can thus be expected to persist only if widespread.

The Mohists' whole approach to inclusive care may imply this conclusion. The Mohists consistently situate inclusive care in a world in which people in general care inclusively. This is in keeping with their approach more generally: they defend their core doctrines as norms for governing the whole world (at least as the Mohists knew it), and their arguments in favor of these doctrines appeal to the benefits that (they claimed) would result if the practices and attitudes were collectively adopted. This approach does not require them to claim that each person should adopt Mohist practices and attitudes even if other people do not, any more than a proposal that people drive on (say) the left side of the road entails that each person should drive on the left even if other people do not: these are proposals for collective rather than individual behavior. The Mohists' explicit account of how people can become inclusive is also collective: they call on the rulers of their time to encourage inclusiveness, saying that if they do, then all their people will become inclusive (15:156–157/83–84, 16:177/95–97).

For these reasons, the Mohists' call for people to care inclusively does not really speak to the situation of an individual agent in a world of people who do not care. But then inclusive care, as the Mohists conceived of it, is unlikely to require the psychological resources that would be necessary to sustain inclusive attitudes in such a world, for such resources would rarely if ever be called on in a world in which people actually do care for one another. In such a world, people without these resources could still display all the virtues and behave in all the ways that the Mohists associated with inclusive care, and it is hard to believe that the Mohists would not consider them inclusive. An inclusive agent therefore need not, and likely would not, have the psychological resources necessary to sustain inclusive attitudes in a world in which they are not widespread, and that is to say that inclusiveness would not long persist in such a world.

The Mohists do, of course, praise people who work tirelessly for the well-being of all even when that behavior is neither common nor reciprocated, and they seem to have expected this of themselves. However, they describe these people as *ren* 仁, or benevolent, not as caring or inclusive. For example, this is how books 15 and 16 describe people who work to promote inclusiveness in a society where it is not widespread (book 14 calls such people sages). This reflects a fundamental difference between inclusive care and the sort of benevolence that remains robust even in a society of people who do not care for others: benevolence is more demanding than inclusive care precisely because the benevolent remain benevolent regardless of how other people behave.⁴⁹

Inclusive care is thus a conditional attitude, in the sense that it can survive only under certain conditions. But it is conditional in another sense as well, for the Mohists' arguments also reveal that the willingness of an inclusive agent to help others is itself conditional.

The Mohists held that people will in general treat better those who care for and benefit them. Given the context in which the Mohists assert this view, it is clear that they take it to hold even among people who are themselves inclusive; the filial piety argument, for example, certainly does not assume that the people whose parents one might benefit are not themselves inclusive. But then the way in which people who care inclusively treat others depends on how those others treat them. And this implies that even the inclusive will not always be willing to help those who do not reciprocate.

The caretaker argument presupposes a related view. Recall that the inclusive officer will take care of my family if I entrust them to him, but not if I simply abandon them or put them in the care of someone who will neglect them. Here the issue is not reciprocity. What makes the difference between the inclusive officer who will take care of my family and the one who will not is that the first has and the second has not formed a friendship with me. Having formed the friendship, it is up to the officer to care for my family, whereas if we do not form a friendship, this is up to someone else (either me or the person I actually entrust my family to). The inclusive officer's willingness to help my family is thus guided at least in part by a normative judgment: he will help them if it is up to him to do so, but not if it is up to someone else (though he would hopefully still be willing to do his part in a collective practice of mutual aid intended in part to ensure the well-being of the neglected; cf. note 39). This reflects a genuine qualification of many people's willingness to concern themselves actively with other people's well-being, and it would not be a surprise if the Mohists noticed this given the moralistic character of their moral psychology (which I take up in the next section).

Inclusive care most likely also implies only a conditional refusal to harm others. This would explain why the Mohists did not see a contradiction between inclusive care and punishment. The punishments that they advocated ran from tattooing to execution, and the Mohists advocated these punishments even when imagining a society governed by the Mohist *dao*.⁵⁰ Most provocatively, book 16 tells us that Kings Wen and Wu manifested their inclusiveness in part by punishing the unruly (16:176/94). This is consistent only if the willingness of the inclusive not to harm others is somehow conditional on how those others behave. Unfortunately the Mohists' only attempt to address this issue (in book 45, the "Lesser Selection") does not treat its substance.⁵¹

The two ways in which inclusive care is conditional are probably related. Consider the situation of an inclusive agent who knows of someone whose needs will not be met unless she does something about it, but who is nonetheless unwilling to help (perhaps because of a failure of reciprocity, or perhaps because she thinks it is up to someone else to help). She will still care for the person, and if the person's situation is made sufficiently vivid her care will presumably be manifest in feelings of distress. This distress, coupled with her unwillingness to help, could easily leave her conflicted, and if such conflict becomes sufficiently frequent or intense, which is precisely what we would expect if many of the people she deals with are not inclusive, she will have to resolve it somehow. One way to resolve it would be to summon additional

psychological resources, and become more benevolent. But another way would be to stop caring for the people she is unwilling to help. It is no doubt because this would be the more common reaction that inclusive attitudes could not long survive in a society of people who do not care.

A common sort of objection to inclusive care loses much of its force given the conditional nature of inclusive care. For most people, inclusive care would be overly demanding and would conflict unreasonably with our particularist loyalties only in a society in which it was not widespread, but it was not one of the Mohists' doctrines that an individual in such a society should care inclusively. For most of us, the real difficulty would lie not in being inclusive when inclusive attitudes are widespread, but in working to promote a social transformation that would make them widespread. But this is no objection against inclusive care, since the Mohists implicitly acknowledged that working for social transformation requires a more robust form of altruism. Objections of this sort have force, if at all, only when considering those who have substantial power or advantage over others, for, as noted above, inclusive care would be relatively demanding for such people, and would conflict more regularly with their particularist loyalties.

Objections such as these are sometimes driven by the question of what inclusive care would demand in a world like our own.⁵² Inclusive care would indeed be an extremely demanding attitude in our world, and might well conflict with our particularist loyalties. But it would be so demanding precisely because our world does not satisfy the conditions under which the Mohists thought inclusive care could persist. Our lives are far more bound up with the lives of strangers than they would have been in the Mohists' time, and a tendency to moralize one's privileges is far more common than is effective concern for strangers. This makes possible a degree of exploitation and injustice that most likely the Mohists never imagined. In conditions such as these, the Mohists would not expect us to care inclusively. They would, however, praise the benevolent among us.

Mohist Care

What, then, is Mohist care? My account of the behavior that it would motivate and the conditions under which it would persist provides the resources for at least a partial answer to this question. My central contention will be that Mohist care is fundamentally a normative attitude, roughly amounting to commitment to the Mohist *dao*.

I have argued that an inclusive agent's willingness to help others, and her refusal to harm them, is conditional on their own attitudes and behavior. This is unlikely to be entirely due to non-moral attitudes. Admittedly I might sometimes respond to someone's failure to reciprocate my care simply out of disappointment at not receiving an expected benefit. And a desire to punish the unruly might sometimes be motivated entirely by a non-moral sort of anger. But we are normally more moralistic than this: anger and similar emotions (resentment, for example) are normally inseparable

from the judgment that someone has wronged us or the people we care about, and such judgments are especially prominent in our responses to failures of reciprocity.

This is, of course, my argument rather than the Mohists'. But the caretaker argument demands just such a moralistic accounting. Recall that the inclusive officer will take care of my family if I explicitly place them in his care, but cannot be counted on if I simply abandon my family or put them in the care of someone who neglects them. It is not an issue here of how I have treated the officer in the past. It is rather whose role it is to take care of my family. In the normal course of things, this is my role, shared with others in my family. If, however, I entrust my family to an officer, it becomes that officer's role. The inclusive officer's willingness to help thus depends in part on whose role he judges it is to help, and he cannot be expected to help unless he has taken on that role by becoming my friend. This is a normative judgment, one that reflects the different normative status my family takes on for him once we enter into a friendship.

The way an inclusive agent acts on his or her care for others thus depends on normative judgments, judgments about whose role it is to take care of whom. Taken together, these judgments imply commitment to a whole collective practice of taking care of one another, or rather to the norms governing such a practice. Elsewhere, the Mohists seem to refer to such a commitment as *yi* 義. They do this in books 11 to 13 when arguing that in the absence of a unifying political authority we would all adopt different *yi* (11:107/55–56, 12:114/59, 13:135–136/71). A *yi* here is probably a commitment to a set of norms applying not only to one's own behavior but also to the behavior of people in general: according to the Mohists, it is precisely people's tendency to condemn (*fei* 非) those with different *yi* that leads to disorder.⁵³ Books 11 and 12 tell us that our disapproval of those with different *yi* can be powerful enough to drive families apart.⁵⁴ This argument takes it to be a fundamental fact of human nature that we commit ourselves to collective norms, and that our behavior toward others depends in part on whether they conform to those norms. What I am suggesting now is that we find the same assumption in the caretaker argument and, implicitly, throughout the Mohists' discussions of inclusive care.

Commitments of this sort are perhaps most frequently manifest in our tendency to be self-righteous about our own interests and the interests of those close to us. Perhaps the Mohists even noticed this. When they say that in the absence of a unifying political authority each person would have a different *yi*, it is hard to see how this could be true unless each person's *yi* were somehow shaped by his or her practical interests (see again 11:107/55–56, 12:114/59, 13:135–136/71).⁵⁵ The Mohists would then be assuming that through example, exhortation, and reciprocity, it is possible to engage our concern with what is right while also separating it from the common tendency to moralize our interests and the interests of those close to us.

In any case, Mohist care, if I am interpreting it correctly, is sensitive to our normative judgments. This may be generally true of our concern for others, and certainly it is easier to act on our concern for others when we feel that others are also doing their part. But in the context of the Mohists' normative theory, we can say

more, and we must say more if we are to explain why they thought of the attitude they recommended as impartial.

Consider the problem. The Mohists described inclusive care as an impartial attitude when they wrote that it amounts to seeing others as one sees oneself or being for others as one is for oneself (14:152/79–80, 15:156/82, 16:172/88). Yet the Mohist *yi* requires us to be partial: how a person treats and feels about others is to depend profoundly on their social and political relations and statuses. The contrary view, though widely held, flies in the face of everything the Mohists actually wrote about family, gender, and politics (cf. the discussion in the section above on “The Core Argument”). And this is not simply a division of labor whereby we share the work of ensuring that everyone is equally well off, for the Mohists’ commitment to hierarchy, especially as expressed in their doctrine of promoting the worthy, clearly requires that some be better off than others. Mohist doctrine is thus impartial neither in how it requires us to feel and act nor in the distribution of benefits it calls for. How, then, is it impartial?

The answer to this question lies in the Mohist concept of benefit (*li* 利). The Mohists regularly pair statements about care with statements about benefiting. To care about someone is to care about what benefits her, and to act out of care is to benefit. And the one point at which the Mohists might consistently embrace impartiality is in the appeals they make to benefit when defending their doctrines. These appeals take at least two forms. First, the Mohists often defended their doctrines by appealing to the benefits that they claim would result if those doctrines were collectively adopted; their core argument for inclusive care (on which see the section on “The Core Argument”) is a case in point. Second, central to the Mohists’ worldview was their faith in a heaven that cares for all and desires what benefits the world. Here it does not matter which if either of these appeals expresses the Mohists’ most fundamental moral convictions—whether, that is, the Mohists embraced a kind of consequentialism or a kind of divine command theory. The key points are that when inclusive care motivates action it motivates benefiting; that the Mohists often presented their doctrines as setting out ways to benefit; that people’s well-being was central to their conception of benefit; and that they most likely thought they were counting all people’s well-being equally.

The last of these points may not be obvious, and certainly the Mohists do not make it explicitly in any surviving text. Nonetheless it is probably an implication of their commitment to the benefit of all the world’s people, and they nowhere so much as consider the possibility that they might privilege the well-being of some over that of others. Especially significant is their argument that we are all better off if competent and virtuous men are willing to take up positions of power, and that they will do this only if doing so brings material and social rewards: they defend an egalitarian distribution of goods by appealing impartially to the well-being of all (8:65–66/30–33, 9:73–76/36–42, 10:96–97/52–53). They express even their commitment to the subordination of women by advocating a separation of women and men, and not any ranking, as if they thought (or anyway would claim) that they counted women’s well-being the same as men’s.

There is room for skepticism here, particularly about the last point. Whatever they might have claimed, the Mohists incorporated into their conception of benefit assumptions about social order that subordinated women. We need not insist on values that the Mohists did not embrace, values such as equality or autonomy, to see this as a threat to women's well-being. The norms that the Mohists endorsed made women substantially more vulnerable than men to harms such as violence or deprivation that the Mohists certainly did recognize. Perhaps the Mohists would argue that taking up the appropriate roles and thus being appropriately separate from men is essential to women's well-being.⁵⁶ But it would be hard to see this as any more than ideological posturing, and in any case it would at best make the problem I am discussing internal to the Mohists' conception of benefit. In short, the problem is that the Mohists were wrong to think (if in fact they did think) that their conception of benefit was impartial. Given the conclusions defended below, this will entail that inclusive care, as the Mohists understood it, would not really be an impartial attitude, despite their apparent claims to the contrary.⁵⁷

Nonetheless, they probably did think that their conception of benefit was impartial, and this is likely why they thought that inclusive care would also be impartial. My suggestion is that inclusive care would be equal concern for everybody's well-being, understanding their well-being as significant not directly for oneself but rather for the norms and institutions governing everybody's behavior. It thus involves taking up a social perspective, where the central practical question is not how *I* will act, but how *we* will act. I care for others in the relevant sense by committing myself to, and living by, collective norms that I justify by appealing to their well-being, and my care is impartial just in case the justification grants equal weight to each person's well-being.

You can think of it this way. If I care for my parents as the Mohists thought I should, then I actively concern myself with their well-being, but I do not expect other people to do the same. I expect them not to discount my parents' well-being entirely; for example, I expect them not to harm my parents. But there is a whole range of filial attitudes and behavior that I do not expect from them. Or rather, I expect them to display such attitudes and behavior, if at all, toward their own parents, not toward mine. Suppose I do expect this of them. Then, in a way, my attitude is that all parents' well-being counts equally. It does not count equally with me: I continue to concern myself primarily with the well-being of my parents. But I expect it to count equally for people taken collectively, and I expect people's collective behavior to ensure that every parent's well-being is secure. More generally, if everybody is partial in the right way, then the social system as a whole will embody an impartial concern for everybody's well-being, and my commitment to that social system will itself be a form of impartial concern.

We have here two sorts of care. Mohist care recognizes the normative significance of people's well-being from a social or collective perspective. It motivates action for the most part through commitment to social norms and a willingness to do one's part in a collective attempt to secure everybody's well-being. This is a universalist and impartial sort of care. On the other hand, care as more familiarly

understood is importantly particularist and inevitably partial. It is an attitude that one person has toward a particular other, and is relatively independent of judgments concerning roles, obligations, and third parties.

The Mohists may have come to see the distinction between these two sorts of care as philosophically significant. A fragment in the “Greater Selection” reads “Taking Zang as one’s kin and caring for him is not caring for one’s kin (以臧為其親也而愛之非愛其親也).”⁵⁸ This seems to distinguish between a care for kin that is direct and one that is mediated by a recognition of social roles. Unfortunately, the Mohists do not develop the distinction or explain why they thought it worth mentioning.

Probably neither of these two sorts of care could ever exist in a pure form, unaccompanied by the other. Even our most particularist care for others is bound up with normative judgments. We respond with moral indignation, and not just non-moral distress or anger, when others harm those we care about. And our care is probably never entirely free of the roles and norms that govern our relationships with others. For its part, Mohist care implies a commitment to partial forms of care so long as it is essential to people’s well-being that they enjoy particular caring relationships with others. For the Mohists, an unfilial son could not live up to the normative commitments implied by inclusive care because to care inclusively is in part to care about filial piety, and this is so despite the fact that filial piety essentially involves particularist attitudes.

It is even possible that the Mohists thought of particularist sorts of care as components of inclusive care. What makes particularist care partial is its impact on our emotions and actions. It does not attribute unequal social and normative significance to people’s well-being; indeed, it does not attribute that sort of significance to people’s well-being at all. Particularist care is thus not partial in a sense that could conflict with the impartiality of inclusive care, and there would be no reason for the Mohists not to think of it as a component of inclusive care. Inclusive care would not then be an entirely normative attitude, though its normative dimension would be what made it impartial. This conjecture has the appealing consequence that when the Mohists called for greater care, they had in mind both particularist and universalist care.

In any case, we can now make good sense of the Mohists’ statement that the inclusive are for others as they are for themselves (16: 172/88). To be for someone is, plausibly, to accord normative significance to her well-being, and this is just what one does when one commits oneself to collective norms that would ensure her well-being if collectively adopted. The metaphor of seeing others as one sees oneself (in books 14 and 15) is less helpful, since it does not indicate the normative dimension of inclusive care and is more easily read as telling us not to differentiate among people at all, which was certainly not the intended point; perhaps this is why the Mohists dropped this metaphor in book 16.

None of this is meant to imply that, in Graham’s words, “the Mohist *ai* is an unemotional will to benefit people and dislike of harming them.”⁵⁹ Though the Mohists say nothing explicit about the affective dimension of inclusive care, this probably reflects their philosophical temperament and goals rather than their conception

of care. We can feel distress at other people's hardships, or satisfaction when things go well for them, even if we feel no abiding concern specifically for them, and the Mohists would most likely take these concerned feelings to be effects of care. And inclusive care might well have its own distinctive affective dimension. We sometimes feel distress or satisfaction at the state of the world quite generally, and the Mohists could have taken such feelings to be manifestations of inclusive care. It is also plausible, given the social perspective implied by inclusive care, that it would give rise to a sense of being involved in a collective project, perhaps something like a feeling of solidarity. Other moral emotions would likely be involved in the expectation that others do their part, including approbation when they do and, when they do not, indignation as well as distress on behalf of those they let down. Finally, if as suggested above the Mohists did think of our particularist cares as components of inclusive care, then a whole range of emotions we feel toward those close to us would be expressions of inclusive care.

Conclusion

It is an intriguing thought that we can care for people by committing ourselves to norms that do not regularly require us to do anything for them. Three features of Mohist philosophy made it natural for them to have this thought: the great weight they place on people's well-being when defending their doctrines, which makes the link between care and normative commitment; their moralistic psychology, which sees people in general as deeply committed to norms; and their focus on collective norms rather than individual ethics, which allows for a kind of care that can be satisfied by the expectation that most others will be well taken care of by the people close to them.

The third of these points is the subtlest but in some ways also the most far-reaching. Care, if understood on an individual level, tends to motivate us to help the people we care about when they are in need and we think we can do something about it. The thought that we might care for all people in this sense is inspiring, but it is also extremely daunting. It would be much less daunting, however, if we lived in a world in which people in general cared, for then strangers in need would rarely benefit from our attempts to help them; they could count, and most likely would prefer to count, on the people close to them. Caring for those in need would then be a collective project, and would rarely place extreme burdens on us.

This of course presupposes that other people can and will do their part. If they cannot or do not, then a commitment to norms calling for them to do their part can hardly count as an expression of care. The Mohists allow some leeway here, recognizing particular cases in which someone who cares inclusively will refuse to help those in need (this is implicit in the caretaker argument, for example). But this could hardly be the general case. In particular, if people are in need because they are deprived of the resources necessary to take care of themselves and those close to them, then those who are better off and who care inclusively will not be satisfied with the thought that it is not up to them to help strangers; presumably they will try to help

out. The Mohists imply as much when they advocate a general system whereby those with talents and resources come to the aid of those less fortunate.

Caring for others thus becomes more demanding as others are unable or unwilling to take care of themselves and those close to them. The Mohists seem to have recognized this in part by distinguishing between inclusive care and benevolence. The benevolent are those who are willing to come to the aid of others without the support of a collective practice of mutual aid. The Mohists demanded this of themselves in their work to promote practices and attitudes that, they thought, would benefit the world. They also seemed to require those who held great advantages over others to be benevolent, at least to an extent. But they did not call on people in general to be benevolent. Conditional care would be enough so long as its conditions were fulfilled, as they normally would be if care for others became a prevalent attitude.

Notes

This essay has benefited from many interactions over several years. I sketched the main argument at the Midwest Conference in East Asian Thought at the University of Southern Illinois, in April 2006, and again at Stockton College later the same month. I presented part of the argument at the Conference on Chinese Philosophy and Moral Psychology at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology in December 2007; this was made possible by a generous grant from the Chiang Ching Kuo Foundation. I presented another part of the argument at the Midwest Conference in Chinese Thought at the University of Southern Illinois in April 2009. Writing of the essay was supported by a Research and Professional Development Grant from the Richard Stockton College of New Jersey. I have had helpful comments on various versions of this essay from Joanne Birdwhistell, Owen Flanagan, Chris Fraser, Bill Haines, Chad Hansen, Loy Hui-chieh, Manyul Im, P. J. Ivanhoe, Tao Jiang, Don Munro, A. T. Nuyen, and Frank Perkins. It has also benefited from discussions with Jiwei Ci, Chad Hansen, Don Munro, Daniel Star, and, especially, Chris Fraser. In it, I make no attempt to reference the vast philosophical literature on the issues I touch on, but I will mention as having been especially helpful for my thinking about the Mohists Brad Hooker's *Ideal Code, Real World* and Jiwei Ci's *The Two Faces of Justice*.

- 1 – I motivate the translation of *jian ai* as “inclusive care” in the next section.
- 2 – See the references listed in note 18 below.
- 3 – Here and below I cite the *Mozi*, giving the book number within the *Mozi* and page references to Wu, *Mozi jiaozhu*, and Mei, *Ethical and Political Works of Motse*.
- 4 – Brooks, “Mwodz 14–16 ‘Universal Love’”; Defoort, “The Growing Scope of *Jian* 兼: Differences between Chapters 14, 15 and 16 of the *Mozi*”; Desmet, “The Growth of Compounds in the Core Chapters of the *Mozi*”; and Fraser, “Doctrinal

Developments in the *Mozi* Triad.” See also Brooks, “The Mician Ethical Chapters.” Graham’s alternative view that books 15 and 16 were written by competing Mohist factions and that book 14 was a later summary of the doctrine is no longer tenable. For Graham’s view, see his *Divisions in Early Mohism Reflected in the Core Chapters of Mo-tzu* (for book 14, see p. 2).

- 5 – Book 14 also does without the Mohists’ notion of *fa* 法, or standards, which later became central to their philosophy (I owe these observations to Fraser, “Doctrinal Developments in the *Mozi* Triad,” p. 1). Though order (*zhi* 治) was central to the Mohists’ conception of benefit, other values were also important.
- 6 – On this point I am in broad agreement with Schumacher, “An Outline of the Evolution of the Concept of *Jian* 兼 in Mohism,” pp. 14–17, and Defoort, “The Growing Scope of *Jian* 兼,” pp. 131–135.
- 7 – See, for example, the charge reported in section 1A/7 of the *Mencius* (but denied by Mencius) that King Xuan had spared an ox out of *ai*, a motivation that is then contrasted with concern for the ox; the charge is that the king was being stingy.
- 8 – See, on the one hand, the reference to infants who *ai* their parents, in *Mencius* 7A/15, and, on the other, *Mencius* 7A/45’s distinction between a gentleman’s *ai* for animals, his benevolence toward the people, and his affection (*qin* 親) toward his family.
- 9 – A nice example occurs in a line quoted in the *Xunzi*: “Only intelligent leaders can *ai* the ones they *ai*, stupid leaders always endanger the ones they *ai*.” The contrast with *wei* 危 (endanger) implies that the first *ai* is behavioral (the second obviously is not); the point is that the intelligent ruler can and the stupid ruler cannot successfully care for those for whom he feels care. See Li, *Xunzi jishi*, p. 282; cf. Knoblock, *Xunzi: A Translation and Study of the Complete Works*, II:189.
- 10 – Chris Fraser taught me this argument. Some writers prefer “concern” when discussing the Mohists, but we should when possible adopt translations that work across a broader range of texts.
- 11 – Cf. Loy, “The Moral Philosophy of the *Mozi* ‘Core Chapters’,” pp. 231–232.
- 12 – Van Norden, *Virtue Ethics and Consequentialism in Early Chinese Philosophy*, p. 179; Shun, *Mencius and Early Chinese Thought*, pp. 30–32.
- 13 – Chris Fraser has made similar arguments in conversation, and the idea of translating *jian* as “inclusive” is, I believe, his.
- 14 – Chris Fraser caught me making this mistake in earlier drafts of this essay.
- 15 – The books devoted to the will of heaven imply a different argument, that we should care inclusively for one another because heaven cares for all. However, appeals to heaven do not play a significant role in the arguments of books 14 to 16.

- 16 – A passage in book 15 makes similar claims when describing the government of King Wen, though that passage does not make it explicit that under King Wen people in general were inclusive; see 15 : 157–158/85–86. Another difference is that the passage from book 15 does not limit its concern for the elderly to men.
- 17 – This is relevant to the difficult question of whether the Mohists' conception of benefit and harm can be unpacked entirely in terms of people's well-being. Their choice of terminology certainly suggests that they thought it can be. They did not, however, explain how some of the things they considered benefits (including the relational virtues, but also a high population) would actually benefit people. Perhaps they took these things to have value independently of the further benefits they lead to, or perhaps they took the benefits of these things for granted. (This footnote is a partial response to concerns raised by Bill Haines.)
- 18 – See, for example, Cai, *Mojia zhexue*, p. 44; Chan, "The Evolution of the Confucian Concept *Jên*," pp. 300–302; Cheng, *Histoire de la Pensée Chinoise*, pp. 102–103; Ching, "Chinese Ethics and Kant," pp. 163–164; Hutton, "Moral Connoisseurship in Mengzi," p. 179; JeeLoo Liu, *An Introduction to Chinese Philosophy: From Ancient Philosophy to Chinese Buddhism*, p. 110; Qingping Liu, "Is Mencius' Doctrine of 'Commiseration' Tenable?" pp. 76–77, 78–79; Nivison, *The Ways of Confucianism: Investigations in Chinese Philosophy*, p. 133; Van Norden, *Virtue Ethics and Consequentialism*, pp. 179–197; Wong, "Universalism Versus Love with Distinctions: An Ancient Debate Revisited," p. 251; and Zhu, *Mengzi jizhu*, p. 272. Many other scholars appear to take for granted this view or something like it, but without asserting it explicitly. Notable exceptions include Fraser, "Mohism," sec. 7; Graham, *Disputers of the Tao: Philosophical Argument in Ancient China*, p. 43; Loy, "Moral Philosophy of the Mozi," chaps. 6 and 7; Schwartz, *The World of Thought in Ancient China*, pp. 146–148, 151; Xiao, *Zhongguo zhengzhi sixiang shi*, pp. 140, 165 n. 39; and Xu, *Mengzi de zhexue*, pp. 285–289.
- 19 – Loy is one of the few exceptions, but takes the Mohists to be saying that we should try to benefit those we interact with as much as we benefit ourselves; this is not an implication of anything the Mohists actually say. See Loy, "Moral Philosophy of the Mozi," p. 243 (but note that Loy concludes, at pp. 244–255, that the arguments of book 15 defend a less stringent doctrine). See also Defoort, "The Growing Scope of *Jian* 兼," p. 129.
- 20 – This is also an obvious consequence of the arguments about inclusive care in Canons B73–75 in the dialectical chapters, on which see Graham, *Later Mohist Logic, Ethics and Science*, pp. 448–450.
- 21 – Xu, *Mengzi de zhexue*, p. 288.
- 22 – The first of these passages does not directly mention inclusive care; both describe the behavior that heaven wants from us in terms that echo passages in books 15 and 16, and other passages make it clear that the main thing heaven wants from us is inclusive care.

- 23 – In this essay I follow the increasingly common practice of leaving the term *ru* 儒 untranslated; the familiar translation “Confucian” inappropriately suggests that Confucius founded the *ru* tradition.
- 24 – Cf. Fraser, *Mohism*, sec. 7.
- 25 – See also Raphals, *Sharing the Light: Representations of Women and Virtue in Early China*, pp. 207–208.
- 26 – Book 16 suggests one point of possible disagreement. There the Mohists praise Kings Wen and Wu, who (the Mohists claim) punished the unruly regardless of whether they were family (and that this is the right way to conduct government is a clear consequence of the Mohists’ doctrine of promoting the worthy). The disagreement with section 7A/35 of the *Mencius* (on Shun’s refusal to let his father be punished) is plain. See *Mozi* 16:176/94.
- 27 – See Robins, “The Moists and the Gentlemen of the World,” for a similar though more general argument.
- 28 – Cf. Xiao, *Zhongguo zhengzhi sixiang shi*, p. 139.
- 29 – I count the caretaker and ruler arguments, which I discuss in the next section, as responses to the same objection. Two of the objections the Mohists respond to in book 16 duplicate the objections they respond to in book 15 (the objections from impossibility and from difficulty).
- 30 – The exception is the objection from filial piety, which I discuss below. Book 16 also responds to but does not quote an objection from difficulty.
- 31 – Only at one point in books 14 and 15 do the Mohists call for care that is not explicitly mutual: the closing statement of book 14 quotes Mozi as saying, “We cannot fail to encourage caring for others (*ai ren* 愛人)” (14:152/80). In book 16 the Mohists most often write simply of inclusiveness (*jian* 兼), which does not by itself imply mutuality.
- 32 – The second version of the claim substitutes *yi* 亦 (indeed) for *bi* 必 (certainly).
- 33 – I here disagree with Nivison, who, however, makes no serious attempt to justify his interpretation of the Mohists on this point. (See Nivison, *Ways of Confucianism*, pp. 83, 130, 113. At p. 130 he appeals in general to the arguments of book 16, without explaining how they imply the extraordinary thesis he attributes to the Mohists.)
- 34 – Loy, “Moral Philosophy of the *Mozi*,” pp. 254–255.
- 35 – Cf. note 26 above. Note also that heaven’s care for all people is analogous to a ruler’s care for his people, and involves benefiting all people (see 26:289/139, 27:298/145, 27:299/145–146, 28:313/153). Book 4 includes an especially interesting argument. The Mohists claim that heaven cares for and benefits people inclusively in order to show that heaven wants people to care for and benefit one another (4:29/14–15; cf. 28:313/153). This characterizes the people’s

caring and benefiting as reciprocal, whereas it characterizes heaven's as inclusive. To some extent this is just rhetoric, for some degree of reciprocity is a precondition of heaven's care as well (since heaven will punish us if we fail to live by heaven's will). But it also reflects the fact that due to heaven's position in the Mohist system, its care requires much more than does the mutual care of ordinary people (though with heaven there is presumably no issue of difficulty).

- 36 – I take these useful labels from Van Norden, *Virtue Ethics and Consequentialism*, pp. 180 and 189.
- 37 – For the full argument, see 16:173–175/89–90.
- 38 – Van Norden, *Virtue Ethics and Consequentialism*, pp. 180–181, 182. See also Hansen, *A Daoist Theory of Chinese Thought: A Philosophical Interpretation*, p. 112.
- 39 – The Mohists nowhere tell us how the needs of those who suffer from neglect will be met. Perhaps the general practice of mutual aid they call for in book 16 would also protect the neglected, and perhaps the inclusive caretaker would be willing to do his part in such a practice even if I do not entrust my family to him; this would certainly be less of a burden than taking them entirely into his care. It is a great pity that the Mohists do not describe this practice of mutual aid in more detail, so that we could address this and other issues with more confidence.
- 40 – The main difference is that the caretaker argument has the inclusive officer saying that to be a high officer “I must be for my friends just as I am for myself, and be for my friends’ families just as I am for my own family,” whereas the inclusive ruler says, “I must be for the persons of my people first, and be for my own person last.” This difference may reflect the greater burden that inclusive care puts on rulers.
- 41 – We find this usage at 16:177/97, for example.
- 42 – On *you* in early China, see Vervoom, “Friendship in Ancient China,” pp. 17–30, and Khayutina, “‘Friendship’ in Early China,” pp. 9–10. Khayutina’s essay is a summary of her Ph.D. dissertation, Институты “друзей” и “гостей” в древнем Китае (*Institutions of “Friends” and “Guests” in ancient China*) (Institute for Oriental Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences, 1999), which unfortunately I am not competent to read.
- 43 – Loy makes the plausible suggestion that the arguments use extreme examples in order to get their audience to imaginatively identify with people who face extreme disadvantages (Loy, “Moral Philosophy of the *Mozi*,” pp. 293–295).
- 44 – On the caretaker argument, see also Tang, *Yuandao pian juan yi: Zhongguo zhexue zhong zhi “dao” zhi jianli ji qi fazhan*, pp. 171–172, and Hansen, *Daoist Theory*, pp. 112–113. Van Norden denies that the caretaker argument appeals in general to cases in which we require the assistance of others, calling

it “textually unsupported” (*Virtue Ethics and Consequentialism*, p. 182). Perhaps his assumption that the Mohists are calling for equal treatment of all others makes it impossible for him to understand the role of friendship in the argument; cf. his comments on friendship, also in *Virtue Ethics and Consequentialism*, p. 182.

- 45 – Chris Fraser pointed out to me the relevance of this maxim to the caretaker argument.
- 46 – This assumption may be implicit in an argument that the Mohists direct at a certain Wumazi at 46:645/219–220. Wumazi says he cannot care inclusively, and seems to say he would be willing to kill others to benefit himself. Queried, he agrees that he makes this attitude known to others, and the Mohists argue that he risks being killed both by those who agree with him (who will be willing to kill him to benefit themselves) and those who disagree (because they will consider his words inauspicious). The Mohists do not supply an argument against those who exclude without letting it be known that they exclude, and it is possible they are presupposing a publicity condition on attitudes. (Tang and Shun make similar suggestions, though Tang focuses on the possibility of universalizing a *dao* to govern all others and Shun on the consequences of promulgating it. See Tang, *Yuandao pian juan yi*, pp. 173–174; and Shun, *Mencius*, p. 33).
- 47 – I thus take Van Norden’s extended treatment of the argument to be largely beside the point, because (following Hansen, *Daoist Theory*, pp. 112–113) he focuses entirely on the question of whether it actually does supply a reason grounded in practical interest to prefer inclusiveness over alternative attitudes. (See Van Norden, *Virtue Ethics and Consequentialism*, pp. 180–189, 377–380.)
- 48 – To my knowledge the most powerful objection along these lines is Tang Junyi’s (*Yuandao pian juan yi*, pp. 229–234).
- 49 – It is an interesting question how this conception of benevolence corresponds to other conceptions, especially *ru* ones. Certainly the *ru* would have agreed that benevolence is a robust form of altruism. They also associated it most with those (especially rulers and gentlemen) who played an important role in maintaining the social system. How it related to the familist values that the *ru* also embraced is a difficult question that goes beyond the scope of this essay (cf. Qingping Liu, “Is Mencius’ Doctrine of ‘Commiseration’ Tenable?”). It remains notable that the doctrine of inclusive care did not put the Mohists deeply at odds with *ru* familism (cf. the discussion at the end of the section above on “The Core Argument for Inclusive Care”).
- 50 – See, for example, 11:109/58, 12:117/64. The first of these passages makes it explicit that the sage-kings used punishments in part to quell those who did not conform to Mohist doctrine, in this case by not conforming to their superiors.
- 51 – Wu, *Mozi jiaozhu*, p. 629; cf. Graham, *Later Mohist Logic*, pp. 487–489.

- 52 – See, for example, Van Norden, *Virtue Ethics and Consequentialism*, pp. 115–116. (Van Norden’s remarks concern only what he calls graded love and do not refer to the Mohists, but a contrast with inclusive care is certainly intended.)
- 53 – Cf. Loy, “On a *Gedankenexperiment* in the *Mozi* Core Chapters,” pp. 147–150.
- 54 – Shun takes this passage to show that according to the Mohists we feel no affection for our families, but their claim is that normative disagreement can overcome even affection for family, not that we have no such affection; see Shun, *Mencius*, p. 34. See also the Mohists’ comment elsewhere that people “contend over a single statement (*yan* 言), this is valuing *yi* more than their own persons” (47:670/222); the Mohists are certainly not saying that people do not value their own persons.
- 55 – Shun similarly notes that it is unlikely that each person could have a distinct *yi* unless his or her *yi* “makes a reference to that individual” (Shun, *Mencius*, p. 33).
- 56 – In the section above on “The Core Argument” I found a hint in book 14 of the similar idea that a father’s well-being depends on whether his son is filial. Whether the Mohists’ thought that being appropriate to our roles is essential to our well-being is key to the interesting issue of whether and to what extent benefit, as they understood it, reduces to well-being, on which cf. note 17.
- 57 – The Mohists’ assumptions about social order may well have discounted the well-being of other groups, but it is hard to be sure. Note in particular that they did not build the inequalities of political hierarchy into their conception of social order, instead defending it (in books 11 to 13) by appealing to that conception.
- 58 – Wu, *Mozi jiaozhu*, p. 597; cf. Graham, *Later Mohist Logic*, p. 252. Graham emends to remove the *fei* 非 (is not), citing parallelism with a subsequent statement. However, I take the point of that subsequent statement to be unrelated (it allows that wanting something for one’s son that one takes to be a benefit counts as caring even if it is not in fact a benefit), and see no reason to remove the *fei*. I here take no position on the dating of the fragments collected in the “Greater Selection”; they may well be substantially later than the books devoted to inclusive care.
- 59 – Graham, *Disputers of the Tao*, p. 41; cf. Cheng, *Histoire de la Pensée Chinoise*, p. 103; Schwartz, *World of Thought*, p. 149; and Wong, “Mohism: The Founder, Mozi (Mo Tzu),” p. 453.

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