



Rethinking Mozi's *Jian'ai*: The Rule to Care

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Abstract

Mozi's 墨子 doctrine of impartial care (*jian'ai* 兼愛) has been interpreted predominantly through the lens of Mengzi 孟子, that is, as “love *without* distinctions” versus “love *with* distinctions.” However, I think Mengzi saw only half of the picture, as his focus was exclusively on the difference between Confucianism and Mohism in regard to the scope, intensity, and sequence of love. In this essay, I argue that Mozi's impartial care is also characteristically different *in kind* from the Confucian notion of humaneness (*ren* 仁). My analysis and comparison of their usage of the word *ai* 愛 shows that Mozi's *ai* is material-oriented care, while the Confucian *ai* is emotion-oriented care. I further argue that Mozi had this particular understanding of care largely because he held a quite negative view of human emotions. For him, human emotions are unreliable and harmful for the practice of care.

Keywords Mozi 墨子 · Confucius · Mengzi 孟子 · *Jian'ai* 兼愛 · Impartial care · Emotion

1 Introduction

Often, when we think of Mozi 墨子, another Chinese thinker comes to mind: Mengzi 孟子. Mengzi set up his position as a defender of the Confucian tradition, claiming that one of the major sources of social disorder was the mistaken teachings of Mozi and YANG Zhu 楊朱 (*Mencius* 3B9).¹ What is intriguing is the way Mengzi reacted to Mozi. Specifically, in the chapter “Against Confucians (Feiru 非儒)” and also frequently in other chapters, Mozi fiercely attacked Confucians on several issues, such as their

¹ For the translation of the *Analects*, I generally follow and modify Edward Slingerland's translation (Slingerland 2003); for the translation of the *Mencius*, I generally follow and modify Irene Bloom's translation (Bloom 2009).

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elaborate and prolonged funerals, reliance on ritual and music, belief in fate (*ming* 命), and traditionalism.² However, rather than responding directly to these criticisms, Mengzi took issue with Mozi's doctrine of *jian'ai* 兼愛 (impartial care).³ It was Xunzi 荀子 who directly and fully replied to Mozi's challenges on issues such as funerals, ritual, music, and frugality.⁴ What is also puzzling is that, as Dan Robins observes, there was no mention of Confucians or the Confucian notion of humaneness (*ren* 仁) in the triplet of "Impartial Care," and even the chapters where Mozi explicitly attacked Confucians did not bring up the Confucian notion of humaneness (Robins 2008: 388).⁵

This raises at least two questions. First, why was Mozi reticent about the Confucian notion of humaneness when he constructed and presented his central doctrine of impartial care? Second, why, then, did Mozi's doctrine of impartial care become the focal point of Mengzi's defense of Confucianism? To answer the first question, Mozi may not have constructed his doctrine of impartial care in direct response or opposition to Confucian teaching. In other words, Mozi may not have presented his teaching of impartial care as an alternative to the Confucian teaching of humaneness. Moreover, it has been pointed out that Mozi acknowledged the importance of filiality (*xiao* 孝), brotherhood (*ti* 悌), and loyalty (*zhong* 忠), which were core Confucian values.⁶ My speculation is that rather than opposing these Confucian values, Mozi imparted different meanings to them and constructed the doctrine of impartial care as a way to fulfill these values. That being the case, the relationship between Mozi and Confucians is more complicated than the outright opposition that Mengzi claimed.

My answer to the second question is twofold. One reason that Mengzi criticized Mozi's doctrine of impartial care is that he considered it to be successful and powerful. As Mengzi himself noted, "The words of YANG Zhu and Mo Di 墨翟 (Mozi) flow throughout the world; the teachings circulating in the world today all go back to either YANG Zhu or Mozi" (*Mencius* 3B9). The other reason is that even if Mozi did not

² Mozi's criticism of Confucians also appears in the chapters "Moderation in Use (Jieyong 節用)," "Moderation in Funerals (Jiezang 節葬)," "Against Music (Feiyue 非樂)," and "Against Fate (Feiming 非命)."

³ Even though Mengzi did not give direct and explicit answers to Mozi's criticism, his understandings of music, ritual, and fate appear to be heavily influenced by Mozi. Mengzi was perhaps reticent about Mozi's criticism because he thought that Mozi made a valid and powerful point. For a discussion of Mozi's influence on Mengzi's understanding of ritual, see Eno 1990: 108–114. However, there is a possibility that Mengzi may not have been fully informed of the Mohist thought. In addition, we should take into account the fact that it is hard to find cases where early Chinese thinkers directly responded to each other. I owe this observation to an anonymous reviewer.

⁴ Xunzi's criticism of Mozi appears in the chapters "Against the Twelve Masters (Feishierzi 非十二子)," "The Strong State (Qiangguo 強國)," "Discourse on Heaven (Tianlun 天論)," "Discourse on Ritual (Lilun 禮論)," "Discourse on Music (Yuelun 樂論)," and "Undoing Fixation (Jiebi 解蔽)." For a detailed discussion of these issues, see Berkson 2016, Hutton and Harold 2016, and Loy 2016.

⁵ Dan Robins claims that Mozi's accusations of being partial in the chapters of "Impartial Care" are not aimed at the Confucians; rather, the targets were his contemporaries, the ruling elites of his time. In other words, Mozi's impartial care was prescribed to cure the social ills of his day, not to dispute the Confucian teaching of humaneness (*ren* 仁). He argues that since the Mohists wished to challenge the customs and rulers of their time rather than to dispute with other philosophers, interpreting the *Mozi* text as a philosophical discourse may be misleading. He further argues that it was this Mohists challenge that actually provoked philosophical argumentation in early China (Robins 2008: 129–130). Chris Fraser presents a similar view (Fraser 2016: 129–130) with which, in general, I also agree.

⁶ More accurately, these values may not have been exclusive to Confucians, but were, rather, shared values among early Chinese thinkers. Additionally, the meaning of these terms was contested in much the same way as terms such as *dao* 道 and *wuwei* 無為 were contested.

conceive or present his doctrine as an alternative to Confucian humaneness, Mengzi regarded Mozi's impartial care as critically different from Confucian teaching. In his appraisal, Mozi's impartial care exhorts us to treat all people equally, whereas Confucian humaneness starts from our parents and family and is to be extended to other people. According to his interpretation, Confucian humaneness is defined as "love with distinctions" or "graded love," and Mozi's impartial care as "love without distinctions."⁷ Mengzi thought that Mozi's impartial care was extremely dangerous because he believed that it opposed one of the core values of Confucianism, filiality.

I think Mengzi was insightful to identify Mozi's impartial care as his main target because it is indeed the backbone of Mozi's teaching. Nevertheless, I think Mengzi saw only half of the picture, as his focus was only on the difference in the scope, intensity, and sequence of love.⁸ He did not see the more fundamental difference between the Confucian version of "love" and the Mohist version of "love." In this essay, I argue that Mozi's impartial care is different from Confucian humaneness not only in degree of scope, intensity, and sequence, but also that it is characteristically different *in kind*. In sum, Confucian humaneness is founded on natural affection toward one's own kin and is to be extended to other people, whereas Mozi's impartial care exhorts us to take care of other people regardless of our feelings toward them. Several prominent scholars have already proposed something like this reading. For example, A. C. Graham interpreted Mozi's *ai* 愛 as an "unemotional will to benefit people and dislike of harming them" (Graham 1989: 41),⁹ and Benjamin Schwartz interpreted it as "an outwardly oriented disposition of mind which focuses wholly on achieving the benefits of others" (Schwartz 1985: 147).¹⁰ However, they have not fully examined the unemotional aspect of Mozi's *ai* 愛.¹¹ In this essay, I argue that Mozi offered a different conception of *ai* from that of Confucians and that he did so largely because he held a quite negative view of human emotions.¹²

In order to show this, I first examine how Mozi's concept of *ai* 愛 differs from Confucian *ai* 愛 and argue that Mozi's *ai* is material-oriented care and Confucian *ai* is

⁷ The phrase "love without distinctions" (*ai wu chadeng* 愛無差等) is actually the word of Yi Zhi 夷之, a later Mohist (*Mencius* 3A5). However, from *Mencius* 3B9, we see that this is also Mengzi's interpretation of Mozi's *jian'ai*. In contrast, the Confucian *ren* 仁 (commonly translated as "humaneness" or "benevolence") is usually translated as "love with distinctions" or "graded love."

⁸ For a detailed discussion of the difference in the scope, intensity, and sequence of love in Mozi and Mengzi, see Back 2017.

⁹ A. C. Graham notes that the word "love" is too vague and too warm to describe Mozi's thought (Graham 1989: 41).

¹⁰ Similarly, Benjamin Schwartz notes that the word "love" refers to an unreasoning passion or attachment, whereas Mozi's *jian'ai* emphasizes the detachment from the emotions (Schwartz 1985: 159). Accordingly, he also defines Mozi's *jian'ai* as "an impartial reasoned concern for all men as ends in themselves" (Schwartz 1985: 149).

¹¹ I think many contemporary scholars do not seem to pay due attention to this aspect of the Mohist view. For example, Carine Defoort argues that *ai* 愛 refers to both actions and feelings (Defoort 2013: 36). Dan Robins is aware of this distinction between actions and feelings, but he argues that even though Mozi did not mention the affective dimension of care, his care might have its own distinctive affective dimension, something like a feeling of solidarity (Robins 2012: 80–81). Curie Virag, who problematizes a clear distinction between emotion and reason in early Chinese thought, offers a different interpretation of Mozi. She argues that Mozi believed those who reasoned properly would come to feel differently as well (Virag 2017: 51–74).

¹² Note that what I am referring to when I discuss emotions in this essay is not all types of emotions, such as joy, anger, sorrow, fear, and so on, but primarily emotions that are directly relevant in the practice of care, such as filial affection, parental affection, fraternal love, and friendship. However, as I will point out in the conclusion, Mozi's negative view of these emotions seems to have extended to emotions in general.

emotion-oriented care.¹³ Accordingly, I translate their differing notions into English as “care / to take care of X” and “caring / to care for X,” respectively. In the second section, I argue that Mozi came up with his notion of a material-oriented care because he held a quite negative view of human emotions. He believed that human emotions are not a reliable source in our practice of care, and also that the care induced from human emotions is harmful to society. In the third section, I examine the alternative source of reference in our practice of care in the *Mozi*: that is, Heaven (*tian* 天). On condition that everyone abides by Heaven’s rule to care, Mozi believed that we can live peacefully with each other.

2 Mozi’s *Ai* versus Confucius’ *Ai*

Unlike what we see in Confucian texts such as the *Mencius* and *Xunzi*, if we look at the *Zhuangzi* 莊子, *Han Feizi* 韓非子, *Huainanzi* 淮南子, and *Annals of Lü Buwei* (*Lü Shi Chunchiu* 呂氏春秋), Confucius and Mozi (or Confucians and Mohists) were often lumped together. This implies that the authors of these texts thought that Confucians and Mohists shared some commonalities. One feature they shared in common was that both teachings were quite successful and prevalent in their times. Another more important aspect is that both Confucius and Mozi subscribed to the ancient ways, appealed to a similar set of former sages, and shared certain key terminologies such as *ren* 仁 (humaneness) and *yi* 義 (righteousness). The *Huainanzi* notes:

Master Mo (Mozi) studied the work of the Confucians and received the techniques of Confucius. [However,] he regarded their rituals to be worrisome and inappropriate, their lavish funerals to be wasteful of resources, impoverishing the people, while their lengthy mourning periods harmed life and impeded undertakings. (Major, Queen, Meyer, and Roth 2010: 864)

We cannot be sure of the historical accuracy of this account—that Mozi first learned and practiced Confucian teaching. Nevertheless, it might help us to understand the nuanced relationship between Confucians and Mozi. If Mozi was indeed versed in the Confucian tradition and became estranged from it for some reason, then our primary task might be to delineate and articulate exactly in what respect Mozi’s thought differed from Confucian teaching, why he developed his thought in the way he did, and what the important implications of his thought are.

One good vantage point for carrying forth this task is to compare their usage of the word *ai* 愛. In *Analects* 12.22, when FAN Chi 樊遲 asked about humaneness (*ren* 仁), Confucius answered, “*airen* 愛人 (*ai* other people).” In the chapter “Impartial Care I,” Mozi also ended with an exhortation, “I cannot but encourage people to *airen* 愛人 (*ai* other people)” (Johnston 2010: 135).¹⁴ The question, though, is when Confucius and Mozi said “*ai* other

¹³ Here, “material-oriented care” includes providing material resources and physical assistance, as well as learning support. In other words, what I mean by “material-oriented” care is care that brings about palpable, concrete benefits to beneficiaries.

¹⁴ The phrase *airen* appears 3 times in the *Analects* (1.5, 12.22, 17.4) and 46 times throughout the *Mozi*. Interestingly, the word *ren* 仁 is equated with *ai* 愛 in a later chapter, “Canons and Explanations II (Jingshuo Xia 經說下),” of the *Mozi* (Johnston 2010: 567). As for the translation of the *Mozi*, I generally follow and modify Ian Johnston’s translation (Johnston 2010). For an interesting discussion of the meaning of *airen* in the *Analects*, see Kim 2014.

people,” did they mean the same thing? We can begin to answer that question by first making clear what they meant by *ai* 愛.

One concrete way to answer this preliminary question is to compare their understandings of filiality (*xiao* 孝), since both Confucius and Mozi considered parents as an important and perhaps our first objects of *ai*: to be filial is to *ai* one's parents.¹⁵ For Confucius, to *ai* parents consists of two components: children's outward actions and inner attitude toward their parents, with the latter carrying much more weight. When Zixia 子夏 asked about filiality, Confucius replied, “It is the countenance that is difficult. If there is work to be done, young people shoulder the burden, and when wine and food are served, elders are given precedence, but surely filiality consists of more than this” (*Analects* 2.8). Confucius is saying that to be truly and fully filial, one should not only materially and physically benefit one's parents, but also be sincerely concerned about their psychological well-being by taking up an agreeable and appropriate attitude toward them.¹⁶ This is the very reason that Confucius denounced the common practice of filiality of his time: “What is meant by filiality nowadays is being able to nourish [parents]. [However,] even dogs and horses are able to be nourished. If [people] are not reverent [to their parents], on what basis are we to distinguish between these [two cases]?” (*Analects* 2.7). In Confucius' view, his contemporaries only focused on the material well-being of parents or they wrongly considered that securing the material well-being of parents is the only basis for filiality. He claimed that children who only provide material benefits to their parents but lack an appropriate inner attitude toward them cannot be called filial. Genuine filiality consists of both filial action and filial affection.

However, children's inner attitudes are not just an important component of filiality for Confucius; they are the essentials. It is children's filial affection that makes their actions truly filial. As Curie Virag notes, one's inner state authenticates one's outward actions (Virag 2017: 33). Why, then, is this internal, emotional component so important for Confucius? First of all, he may have taken for granted that parents want to be loved and respected as well as nourished by their children (when they get old and feeble). Second, for him, children's affection toward their parents is the very reason why they are concerned about the well-being of their parents from the start. In his conversation with Zai Wo 宰我, who asked about shortening the three-year (actually 25 months) mourning period for parents, Confucius peevishly retorted that people mourn for three years because it is congruent with their grief for loss; during that period, children would not get pleasure from eating fine foods, wearing comfortable clothes, or listening to beautiful music (*Analects* 17.21). The filial practice of three-year mourning is a natural expression of filial affection. We have filial affection, and thus, we express this affection properly through our filial actions. The ideal state of filiality lies in this unity between inner feelings and outer actions toward parents. However, in his time, Confucius judged that while people often provided sufficient material support for their parents, their innermost feelings for their parents were either lost or never arose. Therefore, to rebalance and reintegrate this asymmetry between inner state and outer

¹⁵ In *Analects* 1.2, Master You 有子 says, “Filiality and brotherhood constitute the root of practicing humaneness.”

¹⁶ Curie Virag points out that emotions disclose what is inside of us on the outside, and so genuine, spontaneous emotions are visible to others. She calls this aspect of emotions that plays an interface between the self and the world an “ethics of transparency” (Virag 2017: 37). Of course, this is generally true but not necessarily so. Not infrequently, we hide our true emotions or pretend that we have certain emotions inside.

actions was one of Confucius' pressing tasks.¹⁷ Filial actions and filial emotions should go hand in hand. As a consequence, I translate Confucius' *ai* 愛 "to care for X" as a verb and "caring" as a noun, highlighting that Confucius' care should be accompanied with appropriate feelings toward the beneficiary.

On the other hand, the Mohist requirement for filial children is different from that of the Confucians. Mozi said:

Now when a filial son plans for his parents, what is he going to do? If his parents are poor, he seeks to enrich them; if the members of the family are few, he seeks to increase them; and if the family is in disorder, he seeks to bring it to order. (Johnston 2010: 211)¹⁸

In the *Mozi*, the three elements—wealth, population, and order—are taken together to be the barometer to measure the well-being of a state and also its ultimate goal. Here, they apply to the domain of family life. Hence, the most important task of Mohist filial children is to secure the material well-being of their parents by providing them with wealth, more family members, and a stable household. What is required for Mohist children is to provide parents with "nourishment," if we adopt Confucius' words. On the other hand, Mozi mentioned nothing regarding the psychological well-being of parents or the appropriate inner, emotional state that children should possess toward their parents. Contrary to Confucius, Mozi appears to assign a higher priority to children's outer actions over their inner state.¹⁹

This Mohist emphasis on the outer action of providing material benefits is also seen in the following passage: "When [materials] are insufficient, ... if a son seeks help from his parents, he will not get it. And so, the son will be unfilial and will certainly be resentful towards his parents" (Johnston 2010: 219). Mozi contends that without providing material support to their children, parents cannot expect their children to be filial. Their relationships may be switched when parents get old: children should benefit their parents materially and physically, otherwise they should expect nothing but resentment from their parents.²⁰ For Mozi, providing material support is a way to avoid and prevent antagonism between parents and children. This seems to reverse the priority we find in the thought of Confucius, who believed that children's filial affection is more fundamental than filial action. However, this does not mean that Confucius wholly denies the importance of material-oriented care. Although he told Zai Wo that the practice of three-year mourning corresponds to our filial affection, he also added, "The three-year mourning is the common practice throughout the world because a child is completely dependent upon the care of his parents for the first three years of his life" (*Analects* 17.21). In other words, we have filial affection toward our parents because we are raised and nourished by them. No human babies can survive without

¹⁷ The pressing task for Confucians is to guide and orient their filial affection properly through rituals in a way to foster a harmonious relationship between children and parents and so contribute to social harmony.

¹⁸ The same goes with brotherhood (*ti* 悌).

¹⁹ In my view, even if one has filial affection toward one's parents, if one fails to provide material support to them, one may not be considered filial on Mozi's account. Conversely, even though one does not have filial affection toward one's parents, if one succeeds in providing material support to one's parents, Mozi may consider him/her to be filial. I will examine this point later.

²⁰ In "The Will of Heaven II (Tianzhi Zhong 天志中)," Mozi says, "Now suppose there was a man who took care of his son and exerted his strength and capacity to bring benefit to him. If, when the son grows up, he does not repay his father, then the gentlemen of the world will join in saying he is neither humane nor auspicious" (Johnston 2010: 253).

intensive care provided in their infancy and early childhood. All human beings who passed this early stage were looked after at least minimally by someone.²¹ Our filial affections are, as Mozi contends, due at least in part to the material benefit bestowed on us by our parents.

Nevertheless, Confucius would insist that such material support flows out of and should be grounded in sincere feelings of love; this is why we do not tend to think that lavishing more material goods on a child is a reliable measure of greater love for them and that we find parents who provide luxury but show no love as fundamentally failing as parents. As I defined Confucius' *ai* as "caring," the early three years of parental care that Confucius conceived of do not merely refer to material and physical care, but "care with love," "care with affection." Therefore, his vision differs from that of Mozi who conceived care in terms of providing material supports. Mozi's version of care does not hint at an inner, emotional side. His care is "care without love," "care without affection." As a consequence, I translate Mozi's *ai* "to take care of X" as a verb and "care" as a noun, highlighting that Mozi's care is devoid of feelings toward the beneficiary and his care demands beneficial actions to the beneficiary.²² Compared to Mozi's material-oriented care, we may call Confucian caring *emotion-oriented care*.²³

If we read the *Mozi* text with an emphasis on this understanding of material-oriented care, we will have a rather different impression of the *Mozi*.²⁴ If this is right, then the part of Mozi's thought that Mengzi found seriously problematic becomes less of a problem. Mozi did not demand that we love strangers as much as we love our family members from our hearts. Instead, Mozi made the rather more plausible claim that we should provide material support to others, including our family members and close friends, as well as strangers. This still presents a difficult task to most of us because we have to distribute our limited resources to strangers when we could provide much more to those close to us. Nevertheless, Mozi would have agreed that this is a much easier and more practicable task than to demand people to love humanity wholeheartedly.²⁵

²¹ For a study of the critical role of the parent-child relationship in the moral development of infants and children in the early Confucian tradition, see Cline 2015.

²² This is the reason why I also translate Mozi's *jian'ai* as "impartial care," instead of "impartial caring." Dan Robins also adopts "care" as his translation for *ai*, pointing out that *ai* could be entirely behavioral, without being involved with emotion (Robins 2012: 61).

²³ However, the way I differentiate the usages of *ai* 愛 in the *Analects* and the *Mozi* is a bit oversimplified, because my aim is to delineate their marked differences. In the *Analects*, we do find cases where *ai* is used in the sense of material-oriented care. For instance, in *Analects* 3.17, *ai* is used with lamb for sacrifice (*ai qi yang* 愛其羊). Here, Confucius did not mean that Zigong 子貢 cares for the lamb with affection. In *Mencius* 1A7 and 7A45, *ai* is also used in terms of material-oriented care. Dan Robins makes an important observation that *ai* in these cases does not refer to concern for the beneficiary, but concern for the benefactor. In other words, we care for the lamb for the sake of ourselves, not for the sake of the lamb (Robins 2012: 61). This point may provide us with a different way of understanding *ai* in Confucianism and Mohism, and it is noteworthy that in the *Mozi*, non-human animals are not perceived as an object of care.

²⁴ Curie Virag makes an important remark in her book: "To a certain extent, the general failure among scholars to properly understand the rather complex picture of motivation in the *Mozi* can be largely attributed to the fact that the Confucian model of moral psychology is taken as the norm" (Virag 2017: 61). I think this also applies to our understanding of Mozi's *jian'ai*. We fail to properly understand his doctrine because we take the Confucian notion of *ai* as the norm. This may be one of the main reasons that Mengzi and many other scholars misunderstood Mozi.

²⁵ As Immanuel Kant put it, "Love is a matter of feeling, not of willing, and I cannot love because I will to, still less because I ought to (I cannot be constrained to love); so a duty to love is an absurdity" (Kant 1996: 161). Chris Fraser also points out that Mozi's *jian'ai* does not entail that we should feel the same way toward other people (Fraser 2016: 158).

3 Mozi's *Ai* and Emotions

It is worth pointing out that if Mozi's *ai* and Confucius' *ai* are defined as "care" and "caring," respectively, they are not completely antithetical to each other.²⁶ They both viewed "care," that is, "providing benefit," as an important component in our dealings with other people. They parted company with each other concerning their views on the emotional aspect of care. The foremost and only requirement of Mozi's *ai* is to provide material benefit to various others; anything else is not morally relevant. It is curious, then, why Mozi had this particular understanding of *ai*, care. One possible explanation would be a socio-political one. In the Warring States period, with the increase of intrastate and interstate wars, the social conditions of Mozi's world were deteriorating. Furthermore, given the fact that lower classes were much more vulnerable in such a dire situation, it is likely that Mozi, who was allegedly of low social origin, had a drastically dim view of the world (see Graham 1978: 6–7). As Schwartz notes, "In *Mozi* there is a much greater sense of urgency—one might almost say desperation—concerning the task of meeting the elemental needs of the people for food, shelter, clothing, security, and peace" (Schwartz 1985: 151).²⁷ If sheer survival was at a premium in his time, there would not be much room to think about the psychological well-being of parents. Under such circumstances, where material well-being is a top priority, securing safety and comfort for parents would be sufficient to make one a filial child. This may be an easy way to account for Mozi's material-oriented care.²⁸

However, is this the only reason? If so, as social conditions improve to the extent that there is less worry about a lack of material support, Mozi may incline to a Confucian-like view that we should not only take care of others materially and physically, but also from our hearts. At least, Mozi might agree that it is preferable to match our beneficial actions to others with corresponding feelings toward them. However, my speculation is that had he lived in an affluent society, Mozi would not have changed his view, for the reason I will explain. He would have arrived at the same conclusion that care should only be focused on providing material benefits to others, because he held a negative view of human emotions with regard to the practice of care.²⁹ In other words, Mozi did not simply prioritize the material dimension of care

²⁶ Mozi advocated various particularistic values such as brotherhood (*ti* 悌) and loyalty (*zhong* 忠), which were also advocated by Confucians. This may explain why Mozi did not construct his doctrine of impartial care as an alternative to the Confucian project. Like Confucians, the aim of his project is to make people fulfill these various values. At the same time, he may not have fully understood the important implications of the inner dimension of Confucian *ai*, caring; or he may have thought that the inner dimension of care is a conventional view, not particular to Confucians; or even more simply, this may have been the way he understood the word *ai*.

²⁷ For a brief description of social change in Mozi's time, see also Schwartz 1985: 135–137.

²⁸ According to an anonymous reviewer, another crucial point to consider is that while Confucius' model fits a sort of organically integrated clan society, Mozi introduces values that are appropriate to the formation of a different type of community life in which people from different clans should respect and intermingle.

²⁹ When I claim that Mozi held a negative view of human emotions, I specifically refer to the harmful role and relevance of human emotions in moral conduct. As it will be clarified in the end of Section 4, Mozi did not completely deny the value of human emotions per se. He was wary of human emotions in respect to moral conduct. Moreover, it should be noted that Mozi's negative view of human emotions applies largely to people in general. He would acknowledge that the exceptional cases like Shun 舜 are immune to the harmful effect of human emotions. Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for helping me refine these points.

over the emotional part. Rather, he bracketed out the emotional dimension from his notion of care.³⁰

In this regard, Schwartz similarly notes, “The Confucian focus on the inner—the entire brooding on purity of motivation—is a useless diversion from the overwhelming task [of Mozi]” (Schwartz 1985: 147). In his discussion of Mozi’s view on music, FUNG Yu-lan also writes, “According to his positive utilitarianism, man’s numerous emotions are not only of no practical value, but moreover of no significance” (Fung 1983: 90). Philip Ivanhoe makes a relevant point, “[Mozi] showed remarkably little interest in moral psychology [of humans]” (Ivanhoe 1999: 452). This is a precise description because Mozi did not make any explicit discussion of human psychology or human emotions; and yet, this is not an accurate description. In my view, it is not that Mozi was uninterested in human psychology, but, strictly speaking, that he held a quite negative view of it. My claim is that Mozi considered the inner, emotional state of human beings, such as filial affection, parental affection, fraternal affection, and friendship, to be a hindrance to the successful practice of care.

Before examining Mozi’s view of human emotions, I briefly outline why the practice of care is so essential to Mozi’s project. For Confucians, “to care for others (*airen* 愛人)” is the way to achieve humaneness (*ren* 仁), that is, becoming a perfected human being. This also contributes to achieving a harmonious society. In other words, why should I care for others? This is the way a good person lives his/her life and this is the way a society can be ultimately ordered. Accordingly, Confucians are deemed self-cultivationists, and many contemporary scholars consider Confucianism as a form of virtue ethics.³¹ On the other hand, Mohism is generally interpreted as a kind of consequentialist ethics because what is right and wrong is determined by what maximizes material benefit to society: that is, wealth, population, and social order.³² That being so, the goal of Mozi is to make society good: wealthy and ordered. As Chris Fraser puts it, “For the Mohists, ethical issues are framed primarily at the level of society as a whole, not the individual agent” (Fraser 2016: 31). The essential task for attaining social order is to make all members of society take care of each other, to provide benefits to each other. Once all members fulfill this task, Mozi believed that there will be no stealing, no killing, no wars, and thereby, society will be restored to a sustainable condition.³³ Consequently, unlike Confucians, whose primary interest is in turning people into a certain type of being (“being good”), Mozi was concerned with making people behave in a certain way (“doing good”).³⁴ For Mozi,

³⁰ This is why I surmised in footnote 19 that even if one has filial affection toward one’s parents, if one fails to secure their material well-being, Mozi may not consider him/her filial, and also even though one does not have filial affection toward one’s parents, if one succeeds in benefitting them materially and physically, Mozi may consider him/her to be filial.

³¹ One of the seminal works to align early Chinese thought with Western categories of moral theory is Bryan Van Norden’s *Virtue Ethics and Consequentialism in Early Chinese Philosophy* (Van Norden 2007). Here, Confucianism is aligned with virtue ethics, and Mohism with consequentialism.

³² Chris Fraser’s recent book on Mozi is titled *The Philosophy of Mozi: The First Consequentialist* (Fraser 2016). Unlike some scholars, Fraser argues that Mohism is not a form of state consequentialism because right and wrong are not determined by what benefits the state, but by what benefits all the people of the world (Fraser 2016: 17). Accordingly, he presents a new term, “Dao consequentialism,” to describe Mohism (Fraser 2016: 141–143).

³³ Even though Mozi emphasized the enrichment of the state, his goal was not actually achieving an affluent, flourishing society, but rather keeping a society away from serious impairment. This may be one of the reasons that his thought did not survive. This will be discussed further on another occasion.

³⁴ I adopt this distinction of “doing good” and “being good” from Schwartz (Schwartz 1985: 146).

people's practice of care—providing material benefits to others—is the only viable solution for attaining social order.

This grand but simple task, however, does not seem to be easily implemented. Why? In fact, Mozi did not have much discussion of human emotions and their role in human life or in his project. Nevertheless, from his remarks on various topics such as his state of nature argument or his diagnosis of social disorder, we can glean that the inner, emotional state of human beings is a major obstacle to the success of his project. In what follows, I examine the negative aspects of human emotions in two respects: (1) from an individual's point of view, emotions are not a reliable source to prompt a person to practice care to others because emotions are subject to external conditions, and (2) from a society's point of view, the care induced from emotions is detrimental to social order because it tends to shrink the scope of care of each individual.

Before proceeding to Mozi's view on emotions, however, let us first look at the role and value of emotions underscored in the Confucian project. In his conversation with ZAI Wo, Confucius explained that the reason for the practice of three-year mourning for parents is that we grieve the loss of our beloved. When ZAI Wo nonchalantly replied that he would be fine enjoying fine food, nice clothes, and beautiful music during the mourning period, Confucius said, "If you would feel comfortable doing them, then by all means you should!" (*Analects* 17.21). Of course, Confucius is not saying that those who do not feel grief for parents can do as they wish. This can be learned from his last remark after ZAI Wo left, "Did ZAI Wo not receive three years of caring from his parents?" (*Analects* 17.21). Confucius believed that all human beings should care for their parents, given that any human adults are deeply indebted to those who raised, nourished, and cared for them, which in most cases are their biological parents.³⁵ Thus, Confucius here did not point to the fact that children actually experience grief. Rather, he highlighted that the death of parents is the occasion where children should feel grief. As Amy Olberding encapsulates Confucius' claim, "we *ought* to do so": we ought to cultivate the capacity to experience this particular type of grief for parents (Olberding 2012: 156). What is at stake is not the felt, experiential feelings toward parents, but the normativity of filial affection we should inculcate.³⁶

This helps us understand the case of Shun 舜, one of the sages most revered and beloved by Confucians. Shun, in a simple sense, came from a broken family. His father did not love him. His vicious stepmother and stepbrother tried to kill him whenever the opportunity arose. However, Shun never stopped loving them, much less resenting them. As the story goes, his unremitting familial love made his family repent and return to good in the end. This is great filiality (*Mencius* 4A28, 5A1).³⁷ Why was Shun so exceptional? It is because he lived up to the Confucian ideal. The ideal parent-child relationship, as Confucius envisions it, is one in which both sides care for each other. Therefore, like Shun, children should cultivate the capacity to care for their parents irrespective of the

³⁵ Accordingly, for Confucius, what is essential for parenthood is less of biological relationship than of child-rearing devotion. It is just that biological parents usually undertake the job of child-rearing for their biological offspring.

³⁶ Curie Virag makes a similar point: "We are not dealing with subjective determinations of rightness, in the sense that it is up to each person to decide what is the appropriate way to act in a given situation" (Virag 2017: 36).

³⁷ This may apply to Confucius, whose father died when he was still young. The early absence of a father did not lead Confucius to be remiss in his aspiration for filiality.

actual happenings in their lives.³⁸ This normative part is what Shun fulfilled successfully.³⁹ Nevertheless, I think, it is not merely his fulfillment of this task that makes his filiality great. More importantly, people hold his filiality in high esteem because his unremitting love successfully brought his broken family back into the ideal Confucian family: his family members came to care for him as well.⁴⁰ For Confucians, this unremitting familial love is a key to restoring parent-child relationship to the ideal state.

The problem is that this Confucian project does not hold for those who do not share this normative value of human emotions. Virag rightly points out that Mozi did not believe that emotions have normative force (Virag 2017: 51). For Mozi, emotions are just what we feel and experience in real life, and more importantly, the felt, experiential feelings are under the sway of external conditions. As Mozi contended, a relationship between children and parents is contingent upon whether or not material benefits are provided. This implies that even though we owe our early care to our parents, once their care stops being provided, we can be unfilial and even resentful toward them. As he plainly observed, not many parents in the world are *ren* 仁, which can be interpreted as saying that they do not take care of their children.⁴¹ Accordingly, Mozi would have worried, if children base their filial actions on their emotional state toward their parents, many of them would fail to perform their filial actions.

Apparently, there are exceptions, like the sage Shun. He was a moral exemplar exactly because he achieved what ordinary people find hard to achieve.⁴² The trouble for Mozi, however, is that the more admirable Shun is, the more difficult it is for ordinary people to be like him. Mozi's primary concern was not on rare cases of exemplars, but on the majority of people. He wanted to enable each and every person in society to fulfill his/her filial actions toward their parents. In this regard, filial affection is not a good candidate for his project, because obviously not all children will have filial affection toward their parents, and vice versa. Not only in our dealings with parents, but also in all other human relationships, we cannot rely on our inner, emotional state in doing our job of taking care of other people. Emotions are a poor guide for our practice of care, not because they are unable to spur our care to others, but because it is not guaranteed that we will have appropriate emotions toward other people to whom we should practice care.

³⁸ However, in discussing Mengzi's view of the parent-child relationship, Erin Cline claims, "The fact that Shun is a moral exemplar despite having a terrible family situation might lead one to conclude that Mengzi thinks we have sufficient natural resources to become good even in the absence of a nurturing family environment. However, this would seem to be inconsistent with Mengzi's view" (Cline 2015: 30). In order to explain away this discrepancy, she suggests that Shun may have lived a normal life during his early years, but experienced a traumatic family relationship later in his life.

³⁹ Another important aspect of the story is that Shun did not strive to fulfill this task. Shun naturally loved his family members. This is why he was regarded a natural sage.

⁴⁰ Curie Virag points out that the circulation of feelings of care within the familial as well as social sphere is one of the important tasks of ritual (Virag 2017: 36–37).

⁴¹ In "Standards and Rules (Fayī 法儀)," Mozi says, "There are many parents in the world, but only a few are humane. Therefore, we cannot model on those who are not humane" (Johnston 2010: 25). Also, in "The Will of Heaven II," Mozi says, "There are those who are not humane and not auspicious in the world. If a son does not serve his parents, a younger brother does not serve his older brother, a minister does not serve his ruler, the gentlemen of the world call them [not humane] and not auspicious" (Johnston 2010: 251).

⁴² Mozi also praised and revered Shun's admirable achievement, but we cannot find a passage in the *Mozi* where he mentioned the filiality of Shun.

Worse still, Mozi would find problematic even the case in which we happen to have filial affection toward our parents and thereby fulfill our filial action. For him, the care induced from our inner affection toward the beneficiary is harmful from a broad perspective. Let us turn to his diagnosis of social disorder:

1) A son takes care of himself and does not take care of his father, and so he disadvantages his father and benefits himself. 2) A younger brother takes care of himself and does not take care of his older brother, and so he disadvantages his older brother and benefits himself. 3) A minister takes care of himself and does not take care of his ruler, and so he disadvantages his ruler and benefits himself.... 4) A father takes care of himself and does not take care of his son, and so he disadvantages his son and benefits himself. 5) An older brother takes care of himself and does not take care of his younger brother, and so he disadvantages his younger brother and benefits himself. 6) A ruler takes care of himself and does not take care of his minister, and so he disadvantages his minister and benefits himself. How is this? These are all caused by not *xiang'ai* 相愛. (Johnston 2010: 131–133)

The world is in chaos because people do not take care of each other: in Mozi's term, this is not *xiang'ai*. *Xiang'ai* is usually rendered into English as mutual care, that is, X takes care of Y and Y takes care of X. Elsewhere, I argued that another important meaning of *xiang'ai* is bidirectional care, that is, X takes care of himself/herself and also X takes care of another person (Back 2017: 1095–1099). In a disordered world, however, people do not practice bidirectional care; they only take care of themselves. In other words, one's care is unidirectional toward oneself. This applies to all individual parties mentioned above: son, father, younger and older brothers, minister, and ruler. Accordingly, these selfish individuals appear to be the fundamental cause of disorder.

However, Mozi's diagnosis does not stop here. He continues by saying:

1) A thief takes care of his own household but does not take care of other people's households, and so he plunders that of another to benefit his own household. ... 2) A great officer takes care of his own family but does not take care of other people's families, and so he brings disorder to that of another to benefit his own family. 3) A ruler takes care of his own state but does not take care of other people's states, and so he attacks that of another to benefit his own state. ... If we examine this, from what source does [this disorder] arise? These are all caused by not *xiang'ai* 相愛. (Johnston 2010: 133)

This section also demonstrates that the care of these people—a thief, an officer, and a ruler—is not bidirectional. For instance, a thief's care is unidirectional toward his own household, and a ruler's care is unidirectional toward his own state. Nevertheless, these people appear to be different from the selfish individuals described in the previous section. At least these people do care about their household, their family, and their state. They show some concern for others. In a strict sense, they cannot be considered

selfish.⁴³ I think that the frame of egoism/altruism is inappropriate in understanding Mozi's thought, because both selfish and not-so-selfish individuals do not take care of other people, albeit to a differing extent.⁴⁴ In my view, Mozi's interest was not so much on how selfish people are as on why people do not take care of other people.⁴⁵ People's lack of care was Mozi's central concern.

I agree with Dan Robins that Mozi's doctrine of impartial care was not devised as a philosophical discourse against Confucians (Robins 2008). However, comparing it with the Confucian view helps us understand the import of Mozi's view more clearly. Confucians exhort us to expand the circle of our caring from family, to strangers, and to the whole world; the further we expand the circle, the better we become. This gradual program of Confucianism is similar to physical exercise. We can get healthier through daily exercise, but quitting exercise does not cause us to suffer a sudden death. On the other hand, Mozi's project is similar to consuming the bare minimum of food; without the appropriate intake of food, we cannot survive. Just as we need the basic nutrients everyday, like carbohydrates, protein, fat, vitamins, and minerals, we need to practice care toward various others. Specifically, I need to (1) take care of my particular others, such as my parents and my friends (benefiting); (2) take care of strangers, by not stealing, not killing, and so on (not harming); and (3) take care of people in need, such as the weak, the poor, and the lowly (helping).⁴⁶ These are the kinds of care that I should fulfill without exception. Mozi viewed all these cares as something we cannot omit for our survival and for the survival of our society. Mozi's care is not optional.⁴⁷

⁴³ In his recent book *Oneness*, Ivanhoe argues that hyper-individualist conceptions of self and altruism do not do justice to the shape of our moral lives. Even when a person performs altruistic actions, the actions are not completely selfless or other-regarding, because the decision and desire to do such actions is a way to fulfill one's own goal. In other words, altruistic actions not only benefit the beneficiary, but also can benefit the agent as well. Instead, Ivanhoe argues, the oneness hypothesis, which posits that a self is intimately connected with other people, creatures, and things in the world, leads us to rethink the meaning of notions like selfishness, selflessness, and altruism (Ivanhoe 2017: 70–73).

⁴⁴ According to Ivanhoe's definition, "Being selfish means to give excessive or exclusive weight to one's own narrow interests over and against the interests of others; selfishness is interpersonal and characterized by strong personal bias in the distribution of goods, attention, and care" (Ivanhoe 2017: 59). This properly captures the individuals described in the previous section: son, father, younger and older brothers, minister, and ruler who only take care of themselves. However, Ivanhoe also mentions the notion of an expanded sense of self, "that embraces the other and brings it, to varying degrees, within one's conception of oneself" (Ivanhoe 2017: 71). If we apply this to the individuals in this second section—a thief, an officer, and a ruler—these people may have this expanded sense of self, inclusive of their own household, family, and state. If so, their actions are also interpreted as being selfish, because they give priority to the welfare of their own but ignore the welfare of others. And yet, their expanded sense of self leads them to act for the benefit of their own household, family, and state; they are other-regarding and not-so-selfish. My point is that the frame of selfishness-altruism does not provide an adequate answer to Mozi's problem. I think the degree of selfishness and altruism would not be a proper way to understand Mozi's thought. As I will explain in the following section concerning the problem of a false dichotomy, Mozi did not conceive of the world as containing a spectrum of gray. For him, the world consists of black and white.

⁴⁵ These two questions are indeed two sides of the same coin. However, which side one focuses on has different implications.

⁴⁶ For a detailed discussion of the three levels of care, see Loy 2013: 495–500.

⁴⁷ With regard to this point, there is an insightful passage in "Minor Illustrations (Xiaoqu 小取)" of the *Mozi*: "To take care of people requires one to take care of all people without exception, and only then is one considered to take care of people. Not to take care of people does not require one to take care of no people without exception. Since [even not taking care of one person] is loss of taking care of all people, one is considered not to take care of people" (Johnston 2010: 633).

His emphasis on the complete fulfillment of care can also be gleaned from what scholars consider a false dichotomy (Van Norden 2007: 188–189; Fraser 2016: 178). In the above, Mozi said, “A son takes care of himself and does not take care of his father, and so he disadvantages his father and benefits himself.” A sensible reader would find this sentence absurd.⁴⁸ For example, I may not love my parents, but this does not lead me to hate them. By the same token, I may not take care of my parents, but it is a different matter that I inflict suffering on them. In fact, there are more than two options: (1) taking care, (2) not taking care, and (3) harming. However, Mozi argued as if there are only two options: (1) taking care, and (2) not taking care. He regards the absence of care as being identical to harming. Accordingly, he appears to make a false dichotomy. However faulty it looks to us, it works for Mozi.⁴⁹ In Mozi’s view, we need to take care of our parents by providing material benefits to them. If I do not perform my filial action, it means material benefits do not transfer to my parents, remaining with me and benefiting me. Since my parents did not get the benefits that they were supposed to get, this is disadvantageous to them.⁵⁰ Hence, in Mozi’s account, not taking care of parents is tantamount to harming them.⁵¹ Mozi’s equation of the absence of care with active harm underscores his point that the practice of care is not optional, but mandatory. We must fulfill the practice of care to various others; otherwise, we would be harming them.

Why do we not take care of other people? Strictly speaking, why do we take care of some others, but not all others? In other words, we are like children who have a bad habit of eating only what we want. Unfortunately, Mozi did not provide an explicit and direct answer to this question. As I pointed out, the selfishness framework does not adequately explain Mozi’s diagnosis of social disorder. However, we can still discern the commonality among people who do not completely fulfill the practice of care to others. As for the various individuals in the first section—son, father, younger and older brothers, minister, and ruler, they act in the way that I take care of “My” self, but not others. As for a thief, an officer, and a ruler in the second section, they act in the way that I take care of “My” household, “My” family, and “My” state, but not others. The standards of their care are “I.” This *self-centered* care, the care that is induced from the concern for the self, promotes partiality against the remaining others and makes one prone to neglect them. In the chapter “Impartial Care III,” Mozi used the word *bie* 別 to describe this tendency, meaning “to distinguish,” “to differentiate,” and “to

⁴⁸ Thanks to a sensible reader, Richard Kim, for pointing this out.

⁴⁹ I fully agree with Loy’s point that even if Mozi’s arguments appear to be logically unconvincing or even false, they are seldom meaningless or it may be us who do not properly understand his arguments (Loy 2005/06: 142). I think this seemingly false dichotomy is actually the way Mozi conceived of the world. For him, there was no gray area or middle ground; everything was divided between black and white or right and wrong: care (benefit) and not care (harm).

⁵⁰ To give a different example, we have an obligation to take care of strangers: not stealing, not killing, not attacking, and so on. If I steal from others, this is disadvantageous to them; conversely, if I do not steal from others, this is advantageous to them. Therefore, for Mozi, not inflicting harm on others is also tantamount to taking care of them, even though it sounds illogical.

⁵¹ Even if we understand the latter part of the sentence (he disadvantages his father) to be describing the result of the earlier part (he does not take care of his father), it is still the same, since not taking care always result in harming. Moreover, in the chapter “Impartial Care I,” Mozi used the expression of “not taking care of each other” (*bu xiang'ai* 不相愛) to describe social disorder, but in the later chapter, “Impartial Care III,” he dropped this expression and replaced it directly with “harming others and robbing others” (*eren zeiren* 惡人賊人). If we adopt Carine Defoort’s hypothesis that the triplet of “Impartial Care” evolved from I to II and to III, we can see the development of Mozi’s thought from a moderate to a more radical view (Defoort 2013).

discriminate.” We do not just distinguish the self-centered care from the care of the remaining others; we also prioritize the former and often exclude the latter.

Interestingly, the issue of self-centeredness also appears in Mozi's state of nature argument. All three chapters of “Exalting Unity (Shangtong 尚同)” start with an account of the beast-like world before the establishment of political institutions:

In ancient times, when people first came into being and there were as yet no laws or government, each person had different standard (*yi* 義) [of what was right and wrong] in their speech. And so, if there was one person, there was one standard; if there were two people, there were two standards; and if there were ten people, there were ten standards. The more people there were, the more things were considered as standards. In this way, people came to approve of their own standards but condemn those of other people. The consequence of this was mutual condemnation. ... So the world was in a state of disorder comparable to that amongst birds and beasts. (Johnston 2010: 91)

In comparing this with Thomas Hobbes's version of the state of nature, A. C. Graham and Bryan Van Norden identify that the source of conflict is not self-seeking individuals, but the conflicting standards of what is right and wrong (Graham 1989: 45–46; Van Norden 2007: 163).⁵² This is in line with my analysis of Mozi's diagnosis of disorder in his time: the selfishness does not fully explain disorder.

And yet, another question soon arises concerning Mozi's description of the state of nature: if conflicting standards are the cause, what kind of standard can possibly be as varied as the number of people who exist, if we take Mozi's words literally? For example, we ask people whether or not they agree on same sex marriage, or more generally, ask their opinion about this issue. There may be many different answers, but I cannot imagine a situation where each person gives a response wholly different from one another. In this regard, I think Kwong-loi SHUN offers an insightful answer: “That each person has a different view of what is proper makes it likely that each individual's view of what is proper makes a reference to that individual” (Shun 1997: 33).⁵³ The fundamental cause of conflict and disorder is not that individuals are selfish, but that individuals set their own particularity as their standards. The particularity of an individual can include a variety of qualities, such as one's physical trait, intellectual ability, familial background, and social status, as well as one's inner, emotional state. Accordingly, what I mean by self-centeredness is just

⁵² Kwong-loi SHUN and Chris Fraser agree with this view (Shun 1997: 33; Fraser 2016: 80–81). On the contrary, Benjamin Schwartz thought that individuals in the Mohist state of nature are basically self-seeking and self-interested (Schwartz 1985: 142–145).

⁵³ However, Chris Fraser argues that Mozi's point that each person has their own standard should not be understood literally. According to him, this is more of a rhetorical device to highlight the disunity of various standards (Fraser 2016: 81). In a similar vein, Loy argues that this statement may be exaggeration: “What they need for the argument may just be the weaker and more plausible claim that in Hypothetical Scenario (the state of nature), many people are in moral conflict with many other people” (Loy 2016: 151). According to Loy, the Mohists only tried to persuade the necessity of unifying the standards, and so this hyperbole is a reflection of their projected conclusion (Loy 2016: 153).

this: when acting, people set themselves as their own standard.⁵⁴ Their own particularity becomes the standard of what is right and wrong.⁵⁵

One perfect example of this is Wumazi 巫馬子, who appears in the chapter “Geng Zhu 耕柱” as an interlocutor confronting Mozi.⁵⁶ In explaining why he cannot practice impartial care, Wumazi said:

I care for the people of Lu [魯] (my state) more than the people of Zou [鄒] (another state). I care for the people of my village more than the people of Lu. I care for my relatives more than the people of my village. I care for my parents more than my relatives. I care for myself more than my parents. This is based on *the closeness to myself*. If another strikes me, I feel the pain, but if I strike another, the pain is not mine. Why, then should I not care for the one I feel pain for, but care for the one I do not feel pain for? This is the reason why I would kill another to benefit myself rather than kill myself to benefit another.⁵⁷ (Johnston 2010: 655)

Wumazi’s caring is based on how close beneficiaries are to himself; he sets himself as the standard of his caring. Interestingly, he also mentions the pain he feels for himself, but not for others. His inner state serves as a standard of whom he should benefit and whom he should not benefit. We can apply this case to filial affection. Suppose X feels affection toward X’s parents, and thereby he provides material support to them. However, as Wumazi said, X would not have the same feeling toward strangers, and so, if X relies on his inner feelings, he is less likely to take care of strangers.⁵⁸ This is what Mozi called *bie*, “to discriminate” and “to be partial.”

⁵⁴ Ivanhoe defines self-centeredness to be “taking myself as the center of the world”: self-centeredness is a mistaken view about the self. He points out that even though self-centeredness is not actually about what one gives oneself as opposed to what one gives to others, it often leads people to act selfishly, albeit not necessarily. For example, a self-centered philanthropist acts selflessly (Ivanhoe 2017: 59–61). My definition of self-centeredness is closely related to but more general than Ivanhoe’s. I think that for Mozi, not only an excessive concern about oneself, but any actions that come from a concern for oneself would be problematic. To give an example, suppose I love my family and so I care for my family. In Mozi’s view, this is self-centered care, and my self-centered care easily excludes others from the scope of my concern, resulting in selfish action.

⁵⁵ In his detailed discussion of the Mozian state of nature argument, Loy points out that human beings are assumed to be social even in this state of nature and this is the core of the whole problem. He goes on to argue that the cause of moral conflict in the state of nature is, accordingly, not only because people’s standards are subjective or private to the adherents, but also because they are in some ways public and objective in nature. In other words, people apply their own standards not only to themselves, but also to other people (Loy 2005/06: 147–149). I agree that there is regulative function of the standards of what is right and wrong (*yi* 義) in some cases, but I do not think that my particular standard is always regulative of the actions and words of the other person. I think, in Mozi’s account of the state of nature, X has an obligation to X’s parents, but this does not necessitate that X requires Y to have an obligation to X’s parents.

⁵⁶ Some commentators consider Wumazi to be a Confucian. However, Fraser suggests that he was probably not because he was not identified as a Confucian in the *Mozi* text and also his view is not distinctively Confucian (Fraser 2013: 175).

⁵⁷ Here, I translate *ai* 愛 as “to care for,” because this is how Wumazi seems to understand the word.

⁵⁸ This does not mean that X will not take care of strangers. However, the chances are relatively low, first because one’s inner emotions are an unreliable source to prompt one to act for others (the case when one does not have any feelings toward strangers), and second because one’s inner affection toward someone close to oneself could easily surpass one’s emotions toward strangers (the case when one has certain feelings toward strangers, but much weaker than the one toward one’s close others).

Imagine all the people in the world share the same view as Wumazi: X, Y, Z, ... all have filial affection toward their parents, and they act according to their inner feelings. From the Confucian point of view, their filial affections are the universal tendency of human beings and also a desired trait to be universalized. However, from Mozi's point of view, X's affection to X's parents, Y's affection to Y's parents, and Z's affection to Z's parents are all particular instances of human feelings, directed toward discrete objects. If everyone acts according to their particularized standards, they will easily come into conflict with one another. Suppose the parents of X, Y, and Z are drowning and there is only one lifejacket available.⁵⁹ X, Y, and Z will try to secure the lifejacket for their own parents. This is exactly Mozi's reply to Wumazi: "If many people share the same view as yours, they would also try to benefit themselves by harming you, [just as you would harm them in order to benefit yourself]" (Johnston 2010: 657). This will result in what was described in Mozi's state of nature: people will condemn each other and kill each other.⁶⁰ This is because people set themselves as the standard of what is right and wrong. One of the important references to which these self-centered people refer is none other than their inner, emotional state.

To sum up Mozi's view, an emotion-oriented care would be troublesome in two ways. On the one hand, if we rely on our inner feelings toward others, we cannot guarantee the actual practice of care, because our feelings are under the sway of external conditions. On the other hand, even if we do happen to have natural affections toward some others and so we take care of them according to our own feelings, it often enhances partiality against the remaining others and prevents us from completely fulfilling the care of them. As a consequence, our inner feelings are not only an unreliable source for the practice of our care, but also a harmful one.

4 Mozi's Solution: Heaven and Impartial Care (*Jian'ai*)

If we should not rely on our emotions, what should we rely on for the practice of our care? Mozi's answer is Heaven (*tian* 天). After the description of the state of nature, Mozi presented his own solution to the conflicting standards of self-centered individuals. He first set up a strictly hierarchical structure, at the top of which presides the Son of Heaven (*tianzi* 天子), and then the Son of Heaven unifies the various standards of individuals. Yet, it is Heaven that the Son of Heaven should obey, and it is Heaven that provides the ultimate standard.⁶¹ I examine first why it is Heaven and second what standard Heaven commands us.

Like other early Chinese thinkers, Heaven was an important entity in Mozi's thought. This, together with his emphasis on ghosts and spirits, has led some people

⁵⁹ This lifejacket scenario is inspired by Bryan Van Norden's lifeboat scenario. In order to dispute Mozi's view, Van Norden comes up with this thought experiment: "Suppose we are on a sinking ship, with one other family and one lifeboat left on board, and there is room for only one family in that lifeboat." He concludes that in this lifeboat scenario, it is natural for Confucians to attempt to secure the lifeboat for their own family (Van Norden 2007: 193–194). For my answer for Mozi's would-be response to this scenario, see Back 2017: 1106.

⁶⁰ For Mozi's would-be answer to this lifejacket scenario, see footnote no. 78.

⁶¹ In "The Will of Heaven III (Tianzhi Xia 天志下)," Mozi says, "The Son of Heaven cannot act of his own accord to become correct. It is Heaven that rectifies him. ... Heaven is wise. In this case, then, righteousness certainly comes from Heaven. ... The will of Heaven is the standard of righteousness" (Johnston 2010: 265).

to regard his thought as a religious tradition. However, in what follows, I will set aside the issue of religiosity, and instead, investigate what kind of role Heaven played in Mozi's ethical system.⁶² Heaven lays the foundation of Mozi's system, not simply because it presides over the world, but more importantly because it has distinctive attributes: Heaven belongs to no one and Heaven transcends all the particularities of individuals. Mozi said:

There is nothing like emulating Heaven. Heaven's performance is vast and without partiality. Heaven's kindness is thick and without claiming itself. Heaven's brightness is long-lasting and without diminishment. Therefore, sage kings emulate it. ("Standards and Rules"; Johnston 2010: 27)

Heaven's vastness and impartiality opposes the limitedness and partiality of individuals. Heaven stands outside all individuals. From the perspective of Heaven, all beings are deprived of their particularity: "Whether people are young or old, noble or lowly, all of them are the subjects of Heaven" ("Standards and Rules"; Johnston 2010: 27).⁶³ Consequently, it is this distinctive character and position of Heaven that entrusts it with the task of unifying the various standards to perfection.

What is the ultimate standard that Heaven commands us to follow? It is *jian'ai* 兼愛, Mozi's signature doctrine of impartial care. What is impartial care? Mozi said that we can learn from the way Heaven acts:

What is the Will of Heaven that we should accord with? It is *jian'ai*, to take care of the people of the world impartially and inclusively. How do we know that it is to take care of the people of the world impartially and inclusively? It is because Heaven provides food for them impartially and inclusively. ... If it is impartial and inclusive in providing food for them, then it must be impartial and inclusive in taking care of them.⁶⁴ ("The Will of Heaven III"; Johnston 2010: 265–267)

Heaven takes care of people, providing food for them. Heaven's care is, thus, material-based. More importantly, in taking care of people, Heaven is all-inclusive and not partial. Heaven neither favors a certain group of people nor excludes others. This is like when it rains, everyone gets the same amount of rain, and when the sun is out, everyone gets the same amount of sunshine.⁶⁵ This is the way Heaven takes care of people: *jian'ai*. Mozi claimed that we should emulate Heaven and take care of other people impartially and inclusively.

As such, the two essential characteristics of *jian'ai* are impartiality and inclusivity.⁶⁶ First, impartiality means that when we take care of ourselves, there is no ulterior motive, and so, when we take care of other people, we should take the same attitude.

⁶² I will discuss the religious dimension of Mohism on another occasion.

⁶³ For a discussion of Heaven's role in relation to the nature of morality, see Fraser 2016: 123–128.

⁶⁴ Here, "impartially and inclusively" is a translation of the word *jian* 兼. I will explain below why I translated it in this way.

⁶⁵ Some people may raise a question about Mozi's description of Heaven's impartiality. For instance, Heaven does not appear to be impartial given that certain regions are more vulnerable to natural disaster than others. Nevertheless, this is what Mozi interpreted to be the most important character of Heaven.

⁶⁶ For a detailed discussion of Mozi's *jian'ai*, see Back 2017.

In other words, we take care of other people not because we love or pity them, or because they belong to us. As we take care of ourselves unconditionally, we should also take care of other people unconditionally. Heaven commands us: “Take care of other people in the same way you take care of yourself” (“Impartial Care I”; Johnston 2010: 133).⁶⁷ This impartial commitment to my well-being and another’s well-being is the gist of *jian'ai*.⁶⁸ Second, inclusivity refers to the scope of people to whom we should practice impartial care. We should take care of any person or any group of people we encounter in our lives, such as family, friends, strangers, and people in need.⁶⁹ We should provide benefits to our family members and close friends; we should not harm strangers; and we should help people in need.⁷⁰ Regardless of who we are and how we feel, we should divest ourselves of our own particular standards, and instead, follow Heaven’s standard, practicing impartial care inclusively. Heaven’s standard is like a carpenter’s square and compass. As squares and compasses help us to draw a perfect square and a perfect circle, Heaven’s standard helps us to act properly and thereby live peacefully together with other people.

To conclude, following Heaven’s standard protects us from the uncertain and harmful effects of emotions in our practice of care. Whoever we are and however we feel, we should practice impartial care to all the people we encounter in our lives, because this is commanded by Heaven.⁷¹ However, it should be noted that this is different from controlling or eliminating our emotions. Many traditional and contemporary scholars consider that Mozi’s impartial care runs counter to basic human feelings and human nature.⁷² In their view, our affections toward family members and friends are so natural that it is impossible for us to practice Mozi’s impartial care. Moreover,

⁶⁷ Johnston’s translation is “With the love of others being like the love of one self” (Johnston 2010: 133).

⁶⁸ Fraser rightly points out that this impartial treatment of my well-being and another’s well-being is similar in kind but different in degree (Fraser 2016: 170).

⁶⁹ I argue elsewhere that, unlike a Confucian concentric circle, in Mozi’s system the human relationship is conceived as a centripetal circle (Back 2017: 1108–1109). Moreover, when Mozi talked about taking care of people in need, such as the weak and the poor, he did not mention emotional responses like compassion.

⁷⁰ Heaven kindly prepares us with the specific standards that we can follow in all these human relationships. See “Impartial Care II [Jian’ai Zhong 兼愛中]”; Johnston 2010: 139).

⁷¹ Generally, the reason that people can practice impartial care is twofold: those who have reasonable minds understand that following Heaven’s standard is the right decision for the survival of individuals and society as a whole, and those who do not have reasonable minds will also follow Heaven’s standards, otherwise they will be punished. It seems that Mozi believed that people have different intellectual abilities. Accordingly, Virag’s point that Mozi was not just interested in enabling people act differently, but also feel differently is half right. In my view, Mozi did not believe that all people are capable of practicing as Virag claims (Virag 2017: 51). In this respect, Erica Brindley’s suggestion is noteworthy. She argues that for Mozi, “While only a few individuals are morally autonomous in an ultimate sense, the majority of humans are morally autonomous in an interdependent, or proximate sense” (Brindley 2010: 7). This also relates to Fraser’s claim that there are two levels of morality: for the Mohists, righteousness (*yi* 義) refers to what is morally obligatory, and benevolence (*ren* 仁, “humaneness” in my translation) refers to what is morally supererogatory (Fraser 2016: 135). I also argue elsewhere that Mozi’s program demands a differing degree of stringency according to social class (Back 2017: 1099–1103).

⁷² For example, the *Zhuangzi* presents this view. As for a contemporary scholar, Van Norden gives an unfavorable evaluation of Mohism: “It is intellectually impressive and historically important but ultimately fails to convince.” Particularly, his emphasis is marked on the point that Mozi’s chapters of “Impartial Care” fail to be persuasive. The reason is that, like any impartial consequentialism in contemporary Western philosophy, which forces us to take the “view from nowhere,” “[Mozi] thereby ignores the validity of our particular perspectives and the value of the particular commitments and relationships that makes us who we are” (Van Norden 2007: 197–198). For a rebuttal of this point on the “view from nowhere,” see Virag 2017: 62.

since these affections are important constituents of a flourishing human life, we cannot live a meaningful life without them. Therefore, Mozi's doctrine of impartial care is accused of being both impracticable and mistaken.

However, as I pointed out, Mozi did not demand us to love all humanity equally. Rather, his aim is modest: we should practice impartial care to various others—benefiting our particular others, not harming strangers, and helping people in need. This is the way we can survive together. For the success of this task, Mozi exhorted that we should take care of others *without reference* to our feelings, and instead act according to Heaven's standard. However, this does not necessarily entail that we should suppress or ignore our feelings. Suppose I have to share my limited resources with strangers despite the fact that I do not have any feelings toward them. This may *appear* to act against my feelings, but it is actually not, because I am not required to love strangers. Conversely, I have to share my limited resources with strangers despite my filial affection toward my parents. This may *appear* to act against my filial affection, but it is actually not, because I am not required to love my parents any less. Mozi would require us to separate out our emotions from the practice of our care, but not to control or eliminate them.⁷³

Another point to note is that Mozi's impartial care does not oppose human feelings at heart. Even though he was wary of the harmful effect of emotions in the practice of care, he did not seem to disvalue emotions in themselves insofar as they do not serve as motivations for action. In what Van Norden dubbed the "Filial Piety Argument," Mozi argued that a filial son should give priority to the well-being of the parents of others over that of his own parents. The logic behind this is that Mozi believed if I take care of the parents of others first, they will then reciprocate with the same kind of care to my parents, and so the well-being of my parents will be secured more fully.⁷⁴ At the end of the day, my parents will be taken care not only by their own child, but also by other people. Therefore, to practice impartial care may not be an easy thing to do, but this will surely bring a better result to those for whom I feel affection. Mozi believed that in a society where everybody follows Heaven's standard, our feelings toward close others will be satisfied more fully and more securely.⁷⁵ Accordingly, Mozi's doctrine of impartial care does not run counter to basic human feelings. Rather, Mozi devised an indirect but most secure way to fulfill our natural feelings toward our loved ones.⁷⁶

In addition, we are already living many parts of our lives in this way. For example, without traffic rules, nobody can arrive at their destination safely. When the light turns red, however we feel at the moment and however urgent situation we are in, we should stop and wait until the light turns green.⁷⁷ The traffic rule enables us to cross the road

⁷³ In many cases, my filial affection and my filial action coincide, but Mozi warned that we should fulfill our filial action because Heaven commands it.

⁷⁴ As Ivanhoe notes, Mozi shared "a common early Chinese belief in a psychological tendency to respond in kind to the treatment one receives" (Ivanhoe 1999: 452). In "Impartial Care III," Mozi also quotes a line from the *Ode* 256, "No words are without response, no virtue is without reward. If you present me with a peach, I repay you with a plum" (Johnston 2010: 161).

⁷⁵ Accordingly, Dan Robins points out that Mozi's care is conditional (Robins 2012: 73–76).

⁷⁶ Virag makes a similar point. She argues that the perspective of all-inclusive and impartial Heaven is different from Thomas Nagel's "view from nowhere" because it does not imply a transcendence of the particularity of one's individual vantage point (Virag 2017: 62). By adopting a Heaven-like viewpoint, we can divest ourselves of self-centeredness, and our love of particular others will be also fulfilled.

⁷⁷ Of course, there are exceptions such as emergency vehicles.

without crashing into each other, and we can go wherever we want safely and successfully. Following Heaven's standard is just like following the traffic rule. Regardless how much we love our particular others, we should divest ourselves of self-centered concern and take care of other people impartially and inclusively. Then, all our loved ones will be taken care. This is the rule that Heaven provides us.⁷⁸ If we all comply with this *rule to care*, Mozi believes that no one in the world suffers.

5 Conclusion

So far, we have examined Mozi's particular understanding of care and the way he tried to implement his project of care in the world. His notion of care focused on providing material benefits to people. Moreover, he believed that we must provide material benefits not just to some others, but to *all others*, albeit to a differing degree.⁷⁹ I analogize his program of care to the consumption of our basic dietary requirements. Just as we should consume a certain amount of food and certain kinds of nutrients to continue to live, we should fulfill our practice of care to various others. In Mozi's view, the practice of care is not morally desirable, but morally mandatory. This practice of care is also a collective project that all members in society should carry out together.

In order to achieve this goal, Mozi advised that each and every individual in society divest themselves of self-centered standards and, instead, follow the standard of Heaven: *jian'ai*. Heaven commands us to take care of others in the same way we take care of ourselves (impartial treatment of my own well-being and another's well-being), and that we practice this impartial care toward all the people we encounter in our lives (inclusivity). If we follow Heaven's *rule to care* like we follow traffic rules, we can avoid the harmful effect of emotions and successfully fulfill our care to various others, and thereby, the well-being of everyone is fully guaranteed. This is the society that Mozi envisioned, free of war and poverty, where no one suffers.

I have shown that Mozi's view of human emotions is key to making sense of his grand project of *jian'ai*. As I pointed out, he did not engage in explicit discussion of human emotions. I think his negative view of human emotions is like a missing piece of a jigsaw puzzle. If we insert this missing piece, we have a more complete view of Mozi's thought: his particular understanding of material-oriented care, his appeal to Heaven as the source of the rule to care, his diagnosis of social disorder, and his

⁷⁸ Now, we apply Mozi's program to the case of the lifejacket scenario I introduced before. In the world of Mozi, X, Y, and Z not only have an ethical pull to save their own parents, but also have different ethical pulls to save strangers as well. In this scheme, even though the outcome will be the same (since only one person will be saved), their conflict could be more moderate than the case of the Confucian program. This is because in Mozi's scheme it is not simply about choosing among X's pull to save X's parents, Y's pull to save Y's parents, and Z's pull to save Z's parents, but about navigating among X's strong pull to save X's parents and X's weaker pulls to save Y's parents and Z's parents, and also Y's three different pulls as well as Z's three different pulls, respectively.

⁷⁹ One of the unsolved problems of Mozi's thought is, given that we all have limited material resources, how much support we should provide for strangers in comparison to how much support we should provide for our particular others. However, I think the question of the proportion of support is wrong-headed. What Mozi tried to highlight is that our support to close others, irrespective of how much support we provide for them, can be justified insofar as we fulfill our care to strangers and people in need. Not harming others and helping those in need is the minimum requirement that we should fulfill.

discussion of the state of nature argument come together in a systematic whole. Moreover, this missing piece may help us understand other parts of Mozi's thought. In this essay, I focused on a particular type of emotions that are directly related to the practice of care, such as familial affections and friendship. I think his negative view on these specific emotions may have extended to emotions in general. For example, concerning Mozi's criticism of music, the general understanding is that Mozi opposed music, particularly large-scale musical performances at court, because of a lavish expenditure of resources and human labor. However, So-jeong PARK argues that Mozi actually rejected all types of music, regardless of scale, because music is developed out of the human tendency to seek pleasure, and there is no appropriate level to set a limit on this tendency (Park 2015). In other words, Mozi was not simply denying music for materialistic-utilitarian reasons, but more importantly for music's essential feature of instigating human emotions. In addition, we find a more radical suggestion in a later part of the *Mozi*, saying that we should abolish all types of human emotions: "One must do away with pleasure, do away with anger, do away with joy, do away with sorrow, do away with love, do away with hate, and [instead] make use of benevolence and righteousness. When hands, feet, mouth, nose, ears and eyes are devoted to affairs through righteousness, one will certainly become a sage" ("Valuing Righeousness [Guiyi 貴義]"; Johnston 2010: 665). I think the analysis of Mozi's view of human emotions as discussed in this essay can shed light on not only Mozi's criticism of music but also the later development of Mohist thought.

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