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## Mozi: the Man, the Consequentialist, and the Utilitarian

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**Mozi: the Man, the Consequentialist, and the Utilitarian**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy from The College of William and Mary

by

Grace Helen Mendenhall

Accepted for \_\_\_\_\_  
(Honors, High Honors, Highest Honors)

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## *Introduction*

While little scholarship has been done on Master Mozi and his theory of ethics, those who study his work have contributed much to the discipline of philosophy as a whole. Originally, as he never achieved the fame of Confucius, Mencius, or Lao Tzu, Mozi's work was often ignored. Unlike his fellows, until recently, Mozi's writings were not translated and lacked explanatory companion texts. Unfortunately, much of his original works were also destroyed, leaving little for even those interested scholars to interpret.<sup>1</sup>

What philosophical scholarship has been done on Mozi's ethics, in particular, is fairly controversial. Though Chinese scholars have written on Mozi for much longer, the Western debate seems to have begun in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, reaching its peak between the 1960s and 90s. Initially, it was in vogue to classify Mozi as a utilitarian. Even now, many websites or books providing overviews of China's early philosophers offhandedly refer to Mozi as such. None of these claims are well supported, however – many being based solely on a cursory analysis or those famous, overused selections picked out and removed from the work as a whole, thereby losing their meaning. Furthermore, such classifications are often made without reference to what is meant by utilitarianism, as many lack specificity regarding the qualifications Mozi must meet to be eligible. Specifically, such papers tend to ignore the importance Mozi seems to place on the role of Heaven and Heaven's intention in his ethics, instead referring only to those writings which emphasize practical application. In doing so, they disregard the most significant challenge to Mozi's utilitarian status: Heaven as primary moral authority.

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<sup>1</sup> Burton Watson, *Mozi: Basic Writings*, (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2003), 15.

Of course, a number of critiques have been leveled against this classification, and rightly so. There was a resounding response from those who, meaning to more thoroughly and accurately interpret Mozi's ethics, reiterated his strong position on Heaven and presented a number of selections from his work suggesting he might be a divine command theorist. There were others, seeking similar ends, who responded by downgrading Mozi's utilitarian status to that of a more generalized consequentialism.<sup>2</sup>

As of now, the debate has reached an impasse, its participants divided into those who consider Mozi a divine command theorist, and those who consider him a consequentialist. However, in an attempt to distance themselves from those early proponents of the utilitarian interpretation, it seems as though some of these philosophers have made similar mistakes: they are overly selective of Mozi's work and casually discount the original utilitarian interpretation as an already failed attempt. In my own analysis, I hope to apply the same care and attention to the text that the divine command and consequentialist proponents have instituted, but attempt what they did not: more fully and charitably examine Mozi's potential as a utilitarian. In doing so, it will be demonstrated that the text does, in fact, provide sufficient evidence to support this classification and, furthermore, that it is a more accurate representation of Mozi's ethics than either the consequentialist or divine command interpretations.

To this end, the following paper shall seek to examine the meaning and intention of Mozi's original works, ultimately establishing Mozi as a utilitarian and, perhaps, the

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<sup>2</sup> As a point of information, those philosophers who consider Mozi some form of consequentialist include P.J. Ivanhoe, Bryan VanNorden, and David Nivison. Those who support Mozi as a divine command theorist notably include Dennis Ahern, A. Tesu, and David Soles. There are others, such as Changchi Hao and Chad Hansen, who write on Mozi, but are less concerned with this debate in particular, and a larger group of philosophers who work primarily on Mozi's logic.

proponent of a proto-rule utilitarian theory. This will be accomplished in the following manner:

*I: Mozi, the Man:*

This section will provide a context for the argument, outlining significant features of Mozi's life and the development of his theories. The goal of this section is to demonstrate that the initial motivation for his work was in seeking to benefit the common people by promoting peace and working to lessen their hardships. The secondary goal of this section is to reiterate that Mozi lived and wrote in ancient China, and, thus, provide context for particular textual references and the ambiguity of his writing, which will be evident in selections presented throughout the paper.

*II: Mozi, the Consequentialist:*

This section seeks to establish Mozi as a consequentialist, the first step to his classification as a utilitarian. After outlining the requirements of a consequentialist theory, I will demonstrate that Mozi consistently appeals to consequences as a tool of moral evaluation. I will then discuss his appeal to another method of moral evaluation: that of Heaven's will. While seemingly a reason to dismiss Mozi's classification as a consequentialist, it will be shown that Heaven, in fact, is subject to a consequentialist criterion as well. In doing so, I will first evaluate reasons to consider Heaven morally irrelevant to Mozi's ethics. Finding this impossible and, thus, having accepted Heaven's will as a relevant moral authority, I will discuss potential reasons for obeying Heaven's will. This examination will reveal that Heaven itself both appeals and is subject to the consequentialist principle, thus establishing consequentialism as the foundational moral principle of Mozi's work.

### *III: Utilitarianism, as compared to Consequentialism:*

Having established Mozi as a consequentialist theorist, we can now specify what kind of consequentialist he is. Utilitarianism, being a subset of the more general theory of consequentialism, can be considered distinct for three reasons: it is agent-neutral, seeks to maximize good, and conceives of the ‘good’ in hedonistic terms (happiness and pleasure, unhappiness and pain). This section will discuss why each of these reasons has been selected and what these distinctions entail.

### *IV: Mozi, the Utilitarian:*

Provided with a definition of utilitarianism, I will then proceed to apply its distinguishing features to Mozi’s theory. First, I will establish the theory as agent-neutral by citing Mozi’s most famous theory of universal love, often translated as ‘impartial concern.’ I will then establish that Mozi’s theory seeks to maximize the good, citing his work on the sage kings, who Mozi urges to remain peaceful for the good of the common people. I will conclude by demonstrating that Mozi conceives of the good in a manner akin to that of the classical utilitarians – defining it in terms of happiness and unhappiness – as demonstrated by the general intent of his work, as well as the writings of the neo-Mohists.

### *V: Mozi, the Rule Utilitarian:*

Mozi, now classified as a utilitarian, is subject to the same critiques posed to Mill and Bentham; specifically, that utilitarianism morally requires one to commit intuitively wrong acts on the basis that they promote the greatest good. This section posits that, perhaps, Mozi has pre-empted this objection and, in anticipation, proposes a distinctly rule-utilitarian theory of morality. This is evidenced by his direct condemnation of acts

such as offensive warfare. While I do not seek to fully prove this classification, it is suggested by much of Mozi's work, and is, at least, an interesting proposition to consider.

*VI: The Future of Mozi:*

This final section will serve as the conclusion, summing up the purpose of the paper, as well as identifying avenues of continuing research. The ultimate goal of this section is to highlight the importance of Eastern philosophers in the study of philosophy, and provide reasoning for why they should no longer be dismissed by modern educational programs in philosophy, which remain distinctly western in focus.

***I: Mozi, the Man***

Though fairly little is known about the life of Mozi, known also as Mo Di, Master Mo, Master Muiyi, Mo Ti, or Mo Tzu, it is important to give a brief overview of his life and the conditions in which he developed and spread his theory, so as to gain a context for the argument which follows.

It should first be noted that he lived sometime during the fifth century, roughly between 479 BC and 372 BC or, more plainly, the rise of Confucius and the birth of Mencius. As such, Mozi is considered a member of the Hundred Schools of Thought, regarded as an era of cultural and intellectual flourishing during which much of China's current ideology was first proposed. While Taoism and Confucianism have always been considered the two outstanding indigenous philosophical systems in China, Mohism was the first major intellectual rival to Confucius and his followers, and was notably influential in ancient Chinese thought up to the beginning of the Han Dynasty.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Wing-Tsit Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963), 211.

The time during which Mozi began developing his ethical theories is known as the Spring and Autumn period and the Warring States period, which are marked for their technological advancements and political unrest. Written records and archeological discoveries reveal that, during the time, iron tools were being more widely used in agriculture, which led to the necessity of building irrigation systems, which led to self-employment in agriculture, which even further encouraged agricultural advancements. In turn, trade was stimulated and currency exchanged, leading to the formation of cultural centers and the emergence of a class of merchants. As a result of such conditions, non-governmental uncultivated land was largely exploited for private use, leading to the development of smaller production units of one family and one household, which were considered “far superior to the collective labor of the slave system.”<sup>4</sup> These changing relationships of production greatly upset the existing political structure and caused widespread disputes. The newly developing landlord class struggled against the established slave-owning aristocracy, and recently freed slaves, as well as quickly rising merchants and landlords, began to form unique groups with strong opinions on politics, society, and culture.<sup>5</sup>

On a larger scale, China was divided into a number of independent states, each beginning to desperately experiment with alternative forms of governance in hopes of achieving success and stability in spite of the country’s lack of disunity. Amongst these states, alliances were attempted and failed, leading to “an increase in international

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<sup>4</sup> Xian Zhou, and Aimin Cheng, *Mozi: Collection of Critical Biographies of Chinese Thinkers*, (Nanjing City, Jiangsu: Nanjing University Press, 2010), 2.

<sup>5</sup> Zhou, Cheng, 4.

tensions among the Chinese states” and resulting in “a general aura of suspicion and betrayal.”<sup>6</sup> As one scholar elaborates:

The 550 years from 771 to 221 BC were a time of social change and political turbulence, during which no one state was able to dominate China. Not only later scholars, but the philosophers of these times, who believed in a harmonious, noncompetitive world order with a single rather than multiple sources of authority, considered this period an age of decline... The great majority of articulate people who lived through these turbulent centuries did not consider themselves fortunate to have been born into an age when great changes were underway, changes that were to lead to a stronger, more extensive, and more prosperous civilization. They could not know what the future would bring. For them, it was a bewildering and disturbing time. Old beliefs and assumptions were challenged, prompting questions never before raised and stimulating intellectual exploration in many directions. Some of these new concepts were later abandoned; others became the guidelines for Chinese thought for centuries.<sup>7</sup>

It is this environment into which Mozi is born, supposedly into the Lanyi state of Zhu, a dependency of Lu, although this point is disputed. If, indeed, this is the case, he spent his early life in the region of Shandong, where the Zhulou people, known for their spiritual culture, flourished. Politically, however, this state was also in turmoil: the leaders of the region “were enjoying lives of extravagance and dissipation”<sup>8</sup> and faced rebellion from within, as well as from external forces.

Mozi, seeing the widespread conflicts and resultant suffering of the people around him, became concerned primarily with social reform. Growing up in a family of the newly developing class of merchants and producers, he was considered a commoner himself, and was in touch with the concerns of this class. He, however, took the opportunity to be educated, and rose to the rank of an official in the state of Song. As is clear from his frequent references to Confucian texts and his criticism of its particular

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<sup>6</sup> Conrad Schirokauer, *A Brief History of Chinese Civilization*, (New York, NY: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1991), 29.

<sup>7</sup> Schirokauer, 28.

<sup>8</sup> Zhou, Cheng, 6.

ideals, Mozi was certainly trained in classical Confucianism, and “probably admired Confucian theories very highly.”<sup>9</sup> In seeking to relieve the sufferings of the common man, Mozi ultimately found Confucianism to lack a sense of reality and practicality, concerning itself with taxing rituals and rites rather than effective solutions for eliminating every-day strife. According to one source on his writings:

He [Mozi] seems to have been a passionately sincere but rather dour and unimaginative man who, observing the social and moral ills of his time and the suffering which they brought to so many of the common people, felt personally called upon to attempt a cure.<sup>10</sup>

This “unimaginative” nature is considered indicative of Mozi’s writing style, as well. There are eleven sections of the core doctrines of Mohism, entitled: *Exalting Worthiness, Exalting Unity, Universal Love, Condemning Offensive Warfare, Moderation in Funerals, Moderation in Use, Heaven’s Intention, Percipient Ghosts, Condemning Music, Against Fate, and Against the Confucians*.<sup>11</sup> These sections are all included in *The Mozi*, which represents the sum total of Mozi’s work and holds fifteen chapters and seventy-one sections, excepting the eighteen sections which have been lost.<sup>12</sup> Authorship of *The Mozi* is attributed most frequently to Mozi’s followers (although some scholars believe Mozi copied down several of these sermons himself) and appear in a lecture format, each beginning with some formulation of “Master Mozi said x”.

As a philosopher, Mozi was very methodical, defending his arguments in the same logical, “pedestrian and uninspired”<sup>13</sup> way throughout the entirety of his work. Unlike Chinese literature in general, “the style as a whole is marked by a singular

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<sup>9</sup> Zhou, Cheng, 14.

<sup>10</sup> Watson, 5.

<sup>11</sup> Ian Johnston, *The Mozi: A Complete Translation*, (New York, NY: Columbia Press, 2010), vii-ix.

<sup>12</sup> Watson, 2.

<sup>13</sup> Watson, 11.

monotony of sentence pattern, and a lack of wit or grace.”<sup>14</sup> It is believed, however, that this may have been a deliberate choice on the part of the Mohists, rather than a lack of skill. Always striving for practicality and straightforwardness, they might find such a simple style to avoid the ‘misleadingly’ decorated rhetoric of other writers and inspire in its readers faster recall because of its repetitive slogan-like phrases.<sup>15</sup>

This simple, forthright style is evident in Mozi’s logical process. In fact, Mozi “was credited with introducing the logical method of thinking to Chinese philosophy.”<sup>16</sup> He expounds upon this in his own work stating:

Master Mo Zi spoke, saying: ‘There is the foundation; there is the source; there is the application. In what is the foundation? The foundation is in the actions of the ancient sage kings above. In what is the source? The source is in the truth of the evidence of the eyes and ears of the common people below. In what is the application? It emanates from government policy and is seen in the benefit to the ordinary people of the state. These are what are termed the ‘three criteria’.’<sup>17</sup>

He makes clear in this selection that there are three criteria which any argument must meet if it is to be considered valid: (1) its origin, (2) its correspondence to sense evidence, and (3) its practicality. While this process may be, in fact, what makes *The Mozi* a difficult text for Western philosophers, it is easily explained in the context of ancient China. As to (1):

We must remember, however, that in Mozi’s day, so far as we can gather, the majority of educated Chinese accepted without question the following two assumptions: 1) that, at certain periods in the past, enlightened rulers had appeared in China to order the nation and raise Chinese society to a level of peace, prosperity, and moral vigor unparalleled in later days; 2) that, in spite of the paucity of reliable accounts, it was still possible to discover...how these rulers acted and why...and to attempt to put it into practice in the present age.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Watson, 14.

<sup>15</sup> Watson, 15.

<sup>16</sup> Gung-Hsing Wang, *The Chinese Mind*, (New York, NY: Greenwood Press, Publishers, 1968), 76.

<sup>17</sup> Johnston, 321.

<sup>18</sup> Watson, 4.

Taking this into account, Mozi's frequent appeals to antiquated sage kings<sup>19</sup> is slightly more understandable as a rhetorical device, and, certainly in his own time, was incredibly persuasive. In terms of (2) and (3), less explanation is needed: an appeal to the senses, as well as the practicality of a theory, is widely accepted in the Western methodology, and utilized frequently in modern philosophy.

Now clearer on Mozi's life and theories, we wonder how successful a philosopher he actually was. In order to accomplish his goal of social reform and relieve the struggles of the common man, Mozi found it most important to travel to and converse with political leaders throughout China, hoping to "persuade the rulers of his day to cease their incessant attacks upon each other."<sup>20</sup> As you can imagine, this pursuit was not particularly fruitful – for all Mozi's efforts, the tumultuous political environment made many leaders feel threatened, which led them to remain dependent on the assurance of military force. Mozi does write of several successful meetings, during which he managed to prove to one lord or another the overwhelming benefit of peace, but these conversions seem rare.

Unfortunately, Mozi was not much more successful with the masses, who found that his most famous and revolutionary doctrine, that of universal love, went against their own foundational moral beliefs, which aligned much more naturally with the rival school of Confucianism. As Burton Watson, perhaps the most significant translator of Chinese philosophical texts, states:

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<sup>19</sup> In his references to sage kings, Mozi does not mean some kind of eternal, spiritual entity; he means only those wise leaders who ruled in an imagined ancient utopia, a time of peace and tranquility in China. According to Mozi, even Heaven and the ghosts honor these men, who are touted in *The Mozi* as "parents of the people".

<sup>20</sup> Zhou, Cheng, 2.

The society of Mozi's day, with its local prides and strong sense of family solidarity, could not be expected to respond with much sympathy to such a call for universal altruism and love...a doctrine as novel as that of universal love was bound to be met with bafflement and ridicule.<sup>21</sup>

Clearly, Mozi had many forces to struggle against as he attempted to spread and promote his theories.

However, though the reasons are varied and not well documented, at some point Mozi became quite popular amongst the people. This is made clear by a philosophical contemporary of Mozi, Mencius, who proclaimed that, "The words of...Mo Ti fill the country."<sup>22</sup> Perhaps Mozi's theories began to gain notoriety as people slowly became receptive to concepts like universal love, which emphasize mutual benefit rather than the accepted familial structure and ceremonies promoted by Confucius. It could be that this is merely the result of having an ethical 'adjustment period,' during which people became accustomed to hearing these kinds of ideas. Perhaps the in-fighting became overwhelming and the masses were persuaded by Mozi's pacifism. Or, perhaps, the common people found Confucianism overly complicated and taxing in its ritualization. Though the reasons remain unclear, Mencius considered Mozi's theory a veritable threat to Confucianism, and Mohism found itself fairly in vogue. Of Mozi, his contemporaries wrote:

Motzu and his followers wore coarse clothing and worked untiringly day and night for the welfare of others. They never harmed the weak. They rescued people from the ravages of war. They advocated disarmament and abolishment of aggression. They labored to save the world.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Watson, 10.

<sup>22</sup> McIntyre, Stephen R. Nothingistic.Org, "The Works of Mencius: Book 3." Last modified 2009. <http://nothingistic.org/library/mencius/mencius24.html>, chap. 9.

<sup>23</sup> Wang, 75.

Ultimately, in doing this work, Mohism soon became “one of the most important philosophical schools of the time.”<sup>24</sup>

The context of Mohism’s fall is even more revealing than its rise. Due to a fair amount of ideological crossover and a great deal of watering down, Mozi’s theories were absorbed into the rising Mencius and more popular Confucian ideologies, causing his moral philosophy to be widely misinterpreted and his name forgotten. Furthermore, following Mozi’s death, it became difficult to convince people to follow his teachings. As technology continued to progress, the upper class became increasingly more affluent and unwilling to adhere to Mozi’s theories of practical living. This being his target audience, as the lords lost interest, Mohism was largely ignored. Such a process, aided by his monotonous writing style and the lack of substantial companion texts or commentaries, contributed to the death of Mohism.<sup>25</sup>

In the following argument on Mozi’s potential qualification as a consequentialist, then utilitarian, then rule-utilitarian, it will be helpful to keep in mind the context of his life, and the rise and fall of Mohism. Not only does it serve to explain his goals and, as such, the intentionality of his ethical theories, it can help to illuminate his philosophical methods, which, in the West, and during the 21<sup>st</sup> century, may seem odd and unpersuasive.

## ***II: Mozi, the Consequentialist***

First, to determine if Mozi qualifies as a consequentialist:

*What is Consequentialism?:*

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<sup>24</sup> Watson, 12.

<sup>25</sup> Watson, 12-15.

Taken in its most general form, consequentialism “is the view that normative properties depend only on consequences,”<sup>26</sup> most relevant, in this case, in determining the moral rightness or wrongness of an action. This dependence on consequences is presented in opposition to claims of moral rightness based on the circumstances of an act, or its inherent goodness as an act in and of itself. While it is clear that this claim is necessary for a theory to be considered consequentialist, is this the only criterion that Mozi must meet in order to qualify? According to certain philosophers, namely Howard-Snyder, Pettit, and McNaughton and Rawling, consequentialism also requires agent-neutrality. Adding this qualification requires consequentialist theories to hold that, when evaluating the consequences of an act, the good of others is as morally relevant as my own personal good, or the good of my family members, such that the same moral responsibilities apply to anyone, regardless of special relationships.

There are others, set in opposition to these philosophers, who argue that agent-neutrality is specifically utilitarian, to be utilized as a distinguishing feature from standard consequentialism. Regardless, as this paper seeks to establish Mozi as a utilitarian, it will need to be proven that his work supports an agent-neutral theory of moral rightness at some point. However, this distinction is significant because: if Mozi cannot be considered agent-neutral, but agent-neutrality is a necessary feature of consequentialism, then Mozi is not a consequentialist; whereas, if Mozi cannot be considered agent-neutral, but agent-neutrality is *not* a necessary feature of consequentialism, then Mozi will still qualify as a consequentialist but, potentially, not as

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<sup>26</sup> Sinnott-Armstrong, Walter. Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, "Consequentialism." Last modified 2011. <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/consequentialism/>.

a utilitarian. As such, it must ultimately be made clear where any contention might exist: in Mozi as a consequentialist or Mozi as a utilitarian.

To this end, I must evaluate the necessity of agent-neutrality to the consequentialist theory. If we disclude agent-neutrality and take only the broadest definition of consequentialism, we are faced with a number of counterintuitive conclusions “because it includes absurd theories such as the theory that an act is morally right if it increases the number of goats in Texas.”<sup>27</sup> However, while the absurdity of this example is immediately clear, it would *not* be absurd to call this theory consequentialist. Even if an act produces absurd consequences, like an increase in the number of goats in Texas, the theory, by claiming this as an indication of moral rightness, is still definitively consequentialist. As such, while it may be a *bad* consequentialist theory in so far as it confuses which consequences actually matter, it is still based on the basic principle of consequentialism: this being that the moral rightness of an act is determined by its consequences. This same principle is applied in other consequentialist formulations to explain why instituting a ban on smoking, thus saving thousands of lives, could be considered morally right. As such, perhaps using a broader definition will not, by its very nature, pose a problem.

Supporting this claim are a number of consequentialist theories that do not include a requirement for agent-neutrality. One such example is proposed by Skorupski, who claims:

I suggest that ‘consequentialism’ is best used to refer to a view about the relation of the theory of right and the theory of intrinsic value. Consequentialists take a theory of intrinsic value to be basic. They hold that actions can be said to have a degree of goodness or badness, and that goodness or badness of actions is determined by the intrinsic goodness or badness, if any, of the actions themselves.

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<sup>27</sup> Sinnott-Armstrong.

They then hold that an action is right just if it is optimal. (Or that it is right just if the agent, given his information state, should rationally have believed it to be optimal, etc.) They may hold this as a definition of ‘right’, or as a substantive moral position. Since a theory of intrinsic value may generate agent-neutral or (as with Sidgwick’s rational egoist) agent-relative reasons, agent-neutrality is not a necessary condition of consequentialism.<sup>28</sup>

He goes on to discuss John Broome, who also proposes a consequentialist theory which discludes agent-neutrality, but for different reasons. Broome’s conception is such that:

He [Broome] also disapproves of the tendency; but opts to give up on the word ‘consequentialism’ and use ‘teleology’ instead. A ‘teleological theory’ he says, ‘is one in which the rightness of acts is determined by their goodness’ – one in which ‘the right act is the best’.<sup>29</sup>

Regardless of its name, each of these philosophers supports a consequentialist principle separate from a concern for agent-neutrality. As such, agent-neutrality is likely not a necessary feature of consequentialism.

In his work in *Utilitarianism*, Mill specifically discusses agent-neutrality, stating: “As between his own happiness and that of others, utilitarianism requires him to be as strictly impartial as a disinterested and benevolent spectator.”<sup>30</sup> Here, Mill makes clear that utilitarianism emphasizes impartiality, holding that the happiness of one individual is as important as that of any other; his goal being to encourage people to seek to promote the general interests of society as a whole. The fact that Mill takes the time and effort to directly address agent-neutrality indicates that he felt it a relevant issue in his discussion. Considering utilitarianism is a subset of consequentialism, the continuing pertinence of agent-neutrality to the classical utilitarian formulation demonstrates that Mill considers it

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<sup>28</sup> John Skorupski, "Agent-Neutrality, Consequentialism, Utilitarianism... A Terminological Note\*," *Utilitas*, 7, no. 1 (1995): 52.

<sup>29</sup> Skorupski, 52.

<sup>30</sup> John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism and the 1968 Speech on Capital Punishment*, (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2001), 17.

a distinctly utilitarian issue. Sidgwick, another notable early utilitarian, affirms this point in his work on *The Methods of Ethics*, stating:

And here again, by considering how the parts relate to the whole and to each other, I obtain the self-evident principle that the good of any one person is no more important from the point of view (if I may put it like this) of the universe than the good of any other; unless there are special grounds for believing that more good is likely to occur in the one case than in the other. And it is evident to me that as a rational being I am obliged to aim at good generally rather than at any particular part of it. These two rational intuitions rigorously imply the maxim of benevolence in an abstract form, namely that each person is morally obliged to regard the good of anyone else as much as his own good, except when he judges it to be less, when impartially viewed, or less certainly knowable or attainable by him.<sup>31</sup>

Again, in highlighting the role of agent-neutrality in utilitarianism *specifically*, noting that it distinguishes the theory, I am led to believe that this principle, while not non-existent in consequentialism, is not necessary to a consequentialist theory. As such, it will serve as a qualification for utilitarianism, not consequentialism generally.

#### *Meeting These Qualifications:*

Having concluded that Mozi must only satisfy the broader formulation of consequentialism, we must look to his original work in an effort to uncover evidence of his support of consequence as a morally relevant consideration. In doing so, I will reference Mozi's theory of universal love, as well as his condemnation of elaborate funerals, fatalism, wasteful music, and offensive war.

The first of these, universal love, or '兼爱,' is simultaneously the most famous and most widely misinterpreted aspect of Mozi's works. The first of these characters, jiān, is frequently used to indicate the "holding of two or more (official) posts at the same

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<sup>31</sup> Henry Sidgwick, *The Methods of Ethics*, (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 186.

time.”<sup>32</sup> Taken more abstractly, the term refers to simultaneity, a doubling, twice over of a thing. Here, we see the origin of the translation most frequently utilized by scholars of Mozi: *universal*. The second of these characters, ài, is regularly used to express love for one’s country or another person, as well as to indicate enjoyment of some activity or object and, sometimes, the predilection of an individual towards some characteristic.<sup>33</sup> Again, more abstractly, the term indicates love, affection, or fondness.<sup>34</sup> Thus, we achieve the translation: *universal love*. This translation, however, is emotionally manipulative: the term is reminiscent of flower children and free love. This is why it is helpful to be reminded of the term’s origins: simultaneous care for individuals.

Based on my reading of *The Mozi*, I take this formulation of care, presented in a distinctly socratic method of question and answer, to be as follows:<sup>35</sup>

- (1) Mozi begins his argument with its conclusion, stating, “The way in which the benevolent man conducts affairs must be to promote the world’s benefit and eliminate the world’s harm. It is in this way he conducts his affairs.”
- (2) His conclusion now stated, he attempts to prove and clarify, initially going on to state what, exactly, the problem is: “...individuals know only to love their own persons and not those of others. Therefore they do not hesitate to mobilize their own persons to injure others.... Because of want of mutual love, all the calamities, usurpations, hatred, and animosity in the world have arisen.”
- (3) Therefore, “It should be replaced by the way of universal love and mutual benefit.”

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<sup>32</sup> Mandarin Tools, "Chinese-English Dictionary." Last modified 1996. <http://www.mandarintools.com/cgi-bin/wordlook.pl?word=爱&searchtype=chinese&where=whole&audio=on>.

<sup>33</sup> NCIKU Dictionary, "爱 (愛)." Last modified 2013. <http://www.nciku.com/search/zh/detail/爱/1300045>.

<sup>34</sup> Mandarin Tools.

<sup>35</sup> Johnston, 131-65.

(4) Naturally, the question arises of what this way entails, to which he states, “It is to regard other people’s countries as one’s own. Regard other people’s families as one’s own. Regard other people’s person as one’s own.... When all the people in the world love one another, the strong will not overcome the weak, the many will not oppress the few, the rich will not insult the poor...”

(5) Mozi understands that this might seem unrealistic, especially considering the era in which he was writing. He responds to this concern, stating, “This is simply because [people] fail to recognize its benefit and understand its reason. Those who love others will be loved by others. Those who benefit others will be benefited by others. Those who hate others will be hated by others. And those who harm others will be harmed by others.”

From the very start, the consequentialist nature of the universal love theory is made readily apparent. In (1), Mozi refers to the ‘benevolent man,’ this individual being the model of moral rightness. While this ideal of the virtuous person is not the *criterion* for moral rightness, as in virtue ethics, the benevolent man is merely utilized by Mozi as an example to the people. In fact, this man is subject to the criterion of consequentialism: in promoting benefits and removing harm from the world, Mozi claims that he is righteous. Therefore, if I want to be a morally right agent, I too must promote benefits and remove harm from the world. The moral rightness of my own actions, then, depends upon this promotion of benefits and removal of harms. Furthermore, Mozi consistently makes similar appeals to benefit and harm throughout the entirety of his work, which indicates their overwhelming significance to his conception of morality. As such, it is clear that

Mozi appeals to the consequences of an act as a tool of moral evaluation, at least upon initial examination.

To compare Mohism to Confucianism makes this claim even clearer. While both theories, of course, celebrate worldly benefits, under Confucianism these benefits are not what make an act good, but are merely potential side-effects of any act, right or wrong. For Confucius, the value of the act is in the rightness of the act itself rather than the intentions of its actor or the results of the act. So, while Mozi may say ‘the benevolent man devotes himself to the promotion of benefits and the removal of harm,’ Confucius would say something like ‘the benevolent man devotes himself to the promotion of the virtues of ren, li, and yi, or altruism, righteousness, and propriety.’<sup>36</sup> According to the *Analects*, Confucius states:

The Master said, “Wealth and social eminence are things that all people desire, and yet unless they are acquired in the proper way I will not abide them. Poverty and disgrace are things that all people hate, and yet unless they are avoided in the proper way I will not despise them. If the gentleman abandons Goodness, how can he merit the name? The gentleman does not go against Goodness even for the amount of time required to finish a meal. Even in times of urgency or distress, he necessarily accords with it.”<sup>37</sup>

Though difficult to evaluate Confucianism based on a single selection, it does seem apparent that the ‘gentleman’ devotes himself to the Way for its inherent value. As the accompanying commentary claims, this is done “as an end in itself, and [he] does not pursue it for the sake of external goods.”<sup>38</sup> As such, wealth, social eminence, poverty, and disgrace are all secondary concerns to the primary goal of simply acting the “proper way”

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<sup>36</sup> Chan, 211.

<sup>37</sup> Edward Slingerland, *Confucius Analects: with selections from traditional commentaries*, (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2003), 31.

<sup>38</sup> Slingerland, 31.

and seeking Goodness, in the Confucian sense.<sup>39</sup> Mozi, alternatively, believes that wealth, social eminence, poverty, and disgrace are exactly what justify that proper way as proper.

Taken more generally and, perhaps, more clearly, one scholar has the following to say about a comparison between Mohism and Confucianism, as motivated by Mozi's theory of universal love:

Universal love is promoted by Moism because of its beneficial results. There is no conviction that it is dictated by the inherently good nature of man or by the inherent goodness of the act. Although Confucianism teaches love with distinctions, it also teaches love for all, but it does so on the grounds of moral necessity and of the innate goodness of man.<sup>40</sup>

Again, it appears as though the distinction between these philosophers is not one of *what* is good, but rather *why* it is good. Mozi, as stated, appeals to benefits, while Confucius bases his belief on that which he inherently *knows* to be right.

A distinct difference in methodology between Mohism and Confucianism supports this claim. As one scholar states:

...the Mohist criticism was not a statement to the effect that *ren* and *yi* were wrong, and that the Confucianists must not speak in this way, but to the effect that the Confucianists did not know how to put these principles into practice and did not know what their content was nor their function.<sup>41</sup>

Here, it is demonstrated that, while Mozi does not disagree with the values of Confucianism (like *ren* and *yi*, in this example), he finds that the Confucianists lack justification for their beliefs. As the Mohists claim, the Confucianists were unaware of the practical application of their values. It is this practicality that the Mohists, in turn, use to justify their beliefs, and, thus, the motivation for this criticism. It is this difference in

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<sup>39</sup> Goodness, or *ren*, is the foundation of Confucian thought, and, though a deep and complex concept, generally refers to those virtues that all people and states should strive for. It is, essentially, how Confucius identifies the good path, the good act, the good person, or the good characteristic – they are those possessing ‘Goodness,’ or perfect virtue.

<sup>40</sup> Chan, 215-16.

<sup>41</sup> Yu-lan Feng, *The Spirit of Chinese Philosophy*, (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1947), 37.

approach that typifies the Confucian-Mohist divide. Of this division, another scholar claims:

While Confucianists cited historical examples for inspiration and as models, Mo Tzu cited them to show that his teachings had been demonstrated. The differences between the idealistic and practical approach is clear.<sup>42</sup>

It is this practicality that leads Mozi to appeal to consequences as a morally evaluative tool. Unlike the Confucianists, his primary concern is benefits and harms. Clearly, Mozi approaches morality from a position of concern for results.

In this opposition, we are able to see the consequentialist slant more clearly. Most notably, what makes the good act good for Confucius is not that it produces benefit, as the act is already good independent of these results, whereas for Mozi, it is the results that determine the goodness of an act. In support of this claim, Mozi's practical methodology demonstrates the importance he places on results and consequences, whereas Confucius is regarded as more idealistic, with little concern for the practice or function of values.

*The Foundation of this Appeal:*

Having made clear that Mozi, at least in his theory of universal love, appeals to consequences in evaluating the moral rightness of an act, in order to make any kind of claim about his theory as a whole, it must be demonstrated that this appeal is recurring and consistent. Considering he is a philosopher of both a different age and place, demonstrating consistency is one of the only methods of affirming Mozi's theories. As suggested by Section I, he makes few definitive claims, makes multiple or contradictory statements about the same principle, and defines terms differently than a modern, Western scholar. Therefore, in light of these difficulties, I believe it will be helpful to look to Mozi's application of his principle of universal love in the everyday. If it can be

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<sup>42</sup> Chan, 216

demonstrated that he not only appeals to consequences as a tool of moral evaluation generally, but does so methodically and consistently, then we are a step closer to qualifying him as a consequentialist. In order to demonstrate, I will discuss his work in *Against Fate, Condemning Offensive Warfar, Moderation in Funerals, and Condemning Music*.

In the first of these essays, Mozi states:

In this case, then, how do we know that Fatalism is the way of evil men? Formerly, the poor people of earlier generations were covetous of drink and food and were indolent in the content of their affairs so the material for clothing and food was insufficient and the hardships of hunger and cold were extreme. But they did not know [enough] to say: ‘We are weak and unworthy and are not diligent in the conduct of our affairs’. Instead, they had to say: ‘It is our Fate that has determined that we are poor’.<sup>43</sup>

To be a fatalist is to consider all events or actions dependent upon fate and, therefore, to relinquish control over the consequences of one’s own actions. Mozi’s condemnation of such, even without a more thorough consideration of the theory, naturally aligns with consequentialist motives. However, on a deeper level, this selection reveals Mozi’s condemnation of greed and laziness – more importantly, he frames this condemnation in terms of the *consequences* of greed and laziness. It would be easy for Mozi to end the selection after the second sentence; I imagine most people would readily accept that wicked men are greedy and lazy. He goes on, however, indicating that wicked men are not greedy and lazy because these are inherent qualities of wickedness, but because greed and laziness result in negative outcomes, such as hunger and cold, and it is wicked to cause these consequences. The argument can be framed as follows:

- (1) the result of being greedy and lazy is inadequate resources
- (2) having inadequate resources results in starvation and hypothermia

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<sup>43</sup> Johnston, 327.

- (3) greed and laziness cause starvation and hypothermia
- (4) it is wicked to cause starvation and hypothermia
- (5) therefore, it is wicked to be greedy and lazy

Framed in clearer terms, it is evident that Mozi wants to condemn greed and laziness for its *consequences*, specifically the inadequate production of necessary resources. The peasants blame the inadequacy on fate, but Mozi, like any consequentialist, evaluates the present state of hunger and cold as the result of prior actions. As such, he condemns fatalism because of its tendency to make people suffer; as a practice, it produces negative consequences.

He condemns offensive warfare and elaborate funerals in much the same manner. To the first, he claims that war is not inherently bad, but that war is such that “this does not achieve benefit for the people.”<sup>44</sup> Similarly, he finds that “so much wealth is buried in elaborate funerals and long periods of work are suspended in extended mourning” to the extent that elaborate funerals should be banned.<sup>45</sup> In arguing against those proponents of traditional burial ceremonies, Mozi entertains a number of potential justifications for elaborate funerals, but denies them consistently, claiming they result in: poverty, death,<sup>46</sup> and waste of wealth, and do not increase the population, bring order to the government, or enrich the state.<sup>47</sup> Again, he evaluates this custom – as well as offensive warfare – not on the basis of an inherent rightness or wrongness, but on the consequences of their practice – in particular, their potential to cause benefit or harm.

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<sup>44</sup> Johnston, 185.

<sup>45</sup> Johnston, 211.

<sup>46</sup> At the time, as Mozi reiterates, numerous people were often killed and buried along with the general, high-ranking officer, or king that they served.

<sup>47</sup> Johnston, 211-31.

Take, as another example, an activity more widely considered positive, and certainly not inherently morally wrong: music. While it is easy to conceptualize why fatalism, offensive warfare, and elaborate funerals produce justifiably negative results – each does, after all, carry a rather negative connotation in common discourse – music is typically considered to be an enjoyable, valuable activity. One might think, for Mozi to condemn such an activity, that he must be in pursuit of some ulterior motive, appealing not to consequentialism, but an alternative evaluative tool. Quite in opposition, however, Mozi acknowledges how delightful music is, but declares that engaging in music is wrong because it requires heavy taxing on the people. Ultimately, this, he claims, is too great a harm to justify the art. As his works establish:

...Master Mo Zi's condemnation of music is not because he thinks the sounds of the struck bell and the beaten drum, of lutes and pipes, are not pleasing. It is not because he thinks the colours of inlays and patterns are not beautiful. It is not because he thinks the flavours of the broiled meats of grass- and grain-fed animals are not sweet. It is not because he thinks dwellings with high towers, large pavilions and secluded courtyards are not comfortable. Although the body knows their comforts, the mouth their sweetness, the eyes their beauty and the ears their music, nevertheless, when we examine these things in terms of the high, they do not accord with the business of the sage kings, and when we evaluate them in terms of the low, they do not accord with the benefit of the ten thousand people. This is why Master Mo Zi said: "Making music is to be condemned."<sup>48</sup>

The whole of the argument follows this logic:<sup>49</sup>

- (1) When male peasants engage in music, they waste time that could be used producing resources by plowing and planting.
- (2) When female peasants engage in music, they waste time that could be used producing resources by weaving and spinning.

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<sup>48</sup> Johnston, 307.

<sup>49</sup> Johnston, 307-17.

- (3) When male or female aristocrats desire music, they must either hire a member of the peasantry to play this music (see 1 and 2) or tax the peasants in order to purchase instruments or instruction for personal use – in either situation, the people lose important resources like food and clothing.
- (4) If the aristocracy was able to engage in music without involving the peasantry, they would neglect their duties as individuals of power and influence, leaving the country and government in chaos.
- (5) If members of the aristocracy had no duties and wanted to leisurely engage in music without involving the peasantry, they would not want to play or listen alone and, therefore, would cause other members of the aristocracy to neglect said duties of their own.
- (6) Therefore, to produce music does not help the promotion of benefits and the removal of harms in the world.
- (7) Therefore, to engage in music is wrong.

Considering this argument, while it might not be entirely valid to claim that there is no situation in which a member of the aristocracy could engage in music with another member of the aristocracy at a time in which neither had relevant duties to attend to – which seems to be a weakness of Mozi’s argument – what is significant is the manner in which he evaluates the act of engaging in music. Most notably, he is methodically pragmatic and seems to directly appeal to opportunity costs: the peasantry will be unable to produce adequate resources for survival if they spend their time on music, and the aristocracy will either become distracted from their duties as leaders by the pursuit and/or take valuable resources from the peasantry, which, in turn, will lead to chaos in the

country and/or starving, disgruntled peasants. What Mozi is essentially declaring is that, while music is a delightful thing, it has inevitable, negative consequences that are more harmful than music is beneficial. For the peasantry, to decide between making music and plowing the fields is a matter of survival and, for the aristocracy, a matter of survival of the state. Clearly, it is more beneficial for people to be able to eat in the winter than to listen to music. As before, Mozi is concerned with the consequences of the practice, not its inherent moral rightness or wrongness.

*An Appeal to Heaven:*

While it is clear that he appeals to consequences as an evaluative tool in each of these examples and, in true Mozi fashion, nearly all of his recorded theories with monotonous regularity, does he *ever* appeal to another method of judgment? If so, and that appeal is more basic than his concern for consequences, Mozi's status as a consequentialist is questionable. It seems that, in order to be considered consequentialist, a theory must appeal to consequences on the most basic level, such that no other moral evaluative method could override it.

So, what other evaluative tools could Mozi possibly appeal to? Based on the preceding evaluations of his works, it seems fairly evident that he does not appeal to the intrinsic value of an act. In fact, the most difficult hurdle to Mozi's qualification as a consequentialist lies in the significance he attributes to Heaven (T'ien) in his works. As he states at one point in his section on *Heaven's Intention*:

When there is compliance with Heaven's intention, there is rule by righteousness.  
When there is opposition to Heaven's intention there is rule by force.<sup>50</sup>

And:

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<sup>50</sup> Johnston, 241.

I say Heaven is noble, Heaven is wise, and that is all. In that case, then, righteousness undoubtedly comes from Heaven.<sup>51</sup>

And:

For this reason Master Mo Zi said: “Nowadays, if the gentlemen of the world genuinely wish in their hearts to abide by the Way and bring benefit to the people, they must start by examining the basis of benevolence and righteousness, and, in doing this, Heaven’s intention cannot but be complied with.”<sup>52</sup>

Taken together, these selections seem to suggest that Mozi appeals to Heaven as a significant moral authority. Up to this point, considering Mozi’s apparent pragmatism and appeal to benefits, we can guess that he would accept the following:

1a: x is a right action if x produces benefits

2a: x is a wrong action if x produces harms

However, when we consider his writings on Heaven, we could also guess that Mozi might accept the following conditions as well:

1b: x is a right action if x conforms to Heaven’s intention

2b: x is a wrong action if x does not conform to Heaven’s intention

While it seems reasonable to me that Mozi can accept all four and still be considered a consequentialist, he must be shown to rely on 1a and 2a as the *basis* for his ethical conclusions, while 1b and 2b remain secondary; such that, in a situation in which Heaven commands an action which produces harm, that action is still considered morally wrong. In his paper on the topic, Dennis Ahern illuminates this distinction quite well by referring to the aforementioned section on *Condemning Music*. As he states:

Suppose, for the sake of argument, that Mo Tzu was correct in asserting that the elimination of music would bring benefit to the people and to the state. If he held both that the elimination of music was to be justified on utilitarian grounds and that Heaven’s desire to eliminate music was also grounded in utility, then his

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<sup>51</sup> Johnston, 245.

<sup>52</sup> Johnston, 247.

position would be a utilitarian one...But if Mo Tzu held that while the elimination of music may be justified by considerations of utility, the criterion of utility was *itself* to be justified in virtue of Heaven's support for it, then his position would not be a strongly utilitarian one.<sup>53</sup>

*Reasons to Dismiss Heaven:*

Scholars of Chinese philosophy approach this conflict from a number of directions, dividing into those who consider Mozi's morality primarily dependent upon Heaven's will, and those who find his relationship with Heaven either irrelevant or secondary to his practical goals and consistent appeal to consequences. Those in the former group, having deemed Heaven's intention the most important moral agent in Mozi's ethics, primarily classify Mozi as a divine command theorist. As such, this is the interpretation I will be addressing. Understood generally, the divine command theory is based on the principle that morality is dependent upon a higher being, such as God or Heaven; and, further, that the morally right action is that which this being commands.

In order to elucidate this position as it regards Mozi, I will present several selections from those scholars who consider him a divine command theorist. Daniel Johnson, for example, accepts that Mozi is concerned with consequences, but concludes that the divine command interpretation is the most persuasive based on his claim that "Heaven wills the utility criterion itself,"<sup>54</sup> and, thus, we should simply always adhere to Heaven's intention as a moral principle. Dennis Ahern, though less conclusive than Johnson, holds that, if Mozi were to be considered a consequentialist, he would have to declare Heaven's will wrong if it did not comply with consequentialism's standard of right action, but that "there is no evidence that he would advocate this view."<sup>55</sup> Soles,

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<sup>53</sup> Dennis Ahern, "Is Mo Tzu a Utilitarian?," *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, 3, no. 3 (1976): 190.

<sup>54</sup> Johnson, 359.

<sup>55</sup> Ahern, 191.

another famous proponent of the divine command interpretation, holds that, for the Mohists, “what makes Heaven's commands right is the mere fact that Heaven commands them.”<sup>56</sup> Tseu, perhaps, presents the most overarching denial of Mozi’s claim to consequentialism, holding that “the basis of his ethical doctrine is the real existence of a personal God, who is the guarantor of an absolute and objective norm of morality.”<sup>57</sup> He bases this conclusion on an extensive argument which tests a number of consequentialist claims, ultimately maintaining that each fails to present a challenge to the higher moral authority of Heaven.

Faced with these arguments, there are two options left for Mozi-the-consequentialist: either eliminate Heaven, or accept Heaven and reevaluate. The first of these options holds that Heaven’s will, while addressed in Mozi’s work, ultimately has no impact on his ethical theory and, thus, should be considered morally irrelevant.

In order to determine the necessity of even addressing the second option, I will first evaluate the claim that Heaven’s will is morally irrelevant to Mozi’s ethics and should be largely ignored. To begin, I will outline several common claims scholars have made about Mozi’s theories, first presenting the position of the objector to Mozi as a divine command theorist, followed by a typical response.

**Objection 1:** Mozi spends several chapters attempting to prove the existence of ghosts and spirits in his works, but never once attempts to prove the existence of Heaven. As such, we can assume that Mozi used Heaven in order to connect to the spirituality of the common people of ancient China in an attempt to make his theory more appealing, but never actually believed in Heaven. Heaven’s authority, at the time, was accepted

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<sup>56</sup> David Soles, "Mo Tzu and the Foundations of Morality," *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, 26, no. 1 (1999): 46.

<sup>57</sup> Augustinus Tseu, *The Moral Philosophy of Mo-Tze*, (Taipei, Taiwan: China Printing, Ltd., 1965), 199.

without question and, most notably, used to justify leadership according to the Mandate of Heaven. As one scholar states:

The value of the will of Heaven as a moral metaphor in the political and social context is evident. Throughout the history of China, the idea that only those who excel in virtue can govern with the Mandate of Heaven and that Heaven withdraws its support from unjust rulers has exerted a moral force above the laws imposed by arbitrary rule....<sup>58</sup>

Perhaps, then, Mozi is manipulating this acceptance in order to popularize his theory, justifying his own work in a way similar to that of those rulers appointed according to the Mandate of Heaven. Or Mozi may be merely a product of his time, placing little actual, philosophical importance on Heaven, but including it in his work because it has been so thoroughly integrated into the culture.

**Response 1:** In fact, it is the acceptance of Heaven by the common people that demonstrates why Mozi did not *need* to prove its existence in his works. As one scholar states:

...if one understands well the ancient belief of the Chinese people, one is not greatly surprised by this [Mozi's discussion of Heaven], because the ancient Chinese always believed in the existence of a personal God... Hence, we can be sure that Mo-tze did not feel it necessary to prove the existence of God...because proof is needed only when doubt exists....<sup>59</sup>

Interestingly, Mozi instead spends a significant portion of his writings on Heaven attempting to illuminate the ways in which the people of ancient China have actually *abandoned or ignored* Heaven. As Mozi states:

...what the people gain and benefit can, then, be called substantial. Nevertheless, they still do not repay Heaven and do not know they are not being benevolent and good.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Hyun Hochsmann, *On Philosophy in China*, (Toronto, Ontario: Wadsworth, 2004), 106.

<sup>59</sup> Tseu, 101.

<sup>60</sup> Johnston, 252-253.

As a thinker, traveler, and advocate of social change, Mozi was certainly aware of the beliefs and sentiments of the people of his time. Thus, as it seems that people had begun to ignore Heaven, it would have been fruitless for Mozi to appeal to its existence in an effort to persuade them of his theory. Instead, it seems that while the people readily accepted Heaven's existence and authority, its role in their daily lives was fairly insignificant. Rather than trying to relate to them on this point, Mozi is attempting to chastise the people, trying to convince them to be *more* religious than they already were.

Furthermore, to address the latter part of the objection: if Mozi, being a product of the time, only casually or instinctively refers to Heaven, then he would not have spent several chapters reflecting on its intentions. As evidenced by the previously presented selection, Mozi was critical of contemporary attitudes towards Heaven and, as such, must have done careful, motivated thought on the matter. This being true, it seems misleading to claim he places little actual importance on Heaven.

**Objection 2** (Akin to the first objection, but from a different perspective):

Perhaps, though Mozi spends several chapters attempting to prove the existence of ghosts and spirits, he did not sincerely believe in them. It seems, in fact, that the existence of ghosts and spirits is rather inconsequential to the development of his theories as a whole for, as he states:

Even if there were no ghosts and spirits, a sacrifice would yet gather together a party and the participants could enjoy themselves and befriend the neighbors.<sup>61</sup>

This selection, which refers to traditional sacrificial ceremonies made to ghosts and spirits, suggests that even if ghosts and spirits did not exist, making sacrifices is a right action because it allows people to enjoy themselves together. Here, we see that Mozi's

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<sup>61</sup> Tseu, 144.

ultimate moral appeal is to the consequences of the act – specifically, that making sacrifices is good because it brings enjoyment. The act is not considered good because it is in accordance with the will of spiritual beings, as Mozi clearly states that it would be good even if these beings did not exist to be sacrificed to.

If we hold this as true for ghosts and spirits, perhaps, through analogy, it is also true of Heaven. Perhaps the acts Mozi considers good would be good whether or not there exists a Heaven to will them. Heaven, then, may know and desire the right act, but even if Heaven did not exist, the act would still be right. As such, there must be some criterion of rightness that is more foundational than Heaven's will. This does not seem an inappropriate analogy to make, for Mozi frequently associates Heaven with ghosts and spirits. As he states in his work on Heaven:

Therefore, in ancient times, the sage kings were clear in their knowledge of what Heaven and ghosts gave their blessings to, and avoided what Heaven and ghosts detested.<sup>62</sup>

Not only does he relate Heaven and ghosts by writing of the two together, he relates them through functionality. It seems that Mozi considers the role of Heaven and the role of ghosts and spirits to function in quite a similar way, claiming that both can reward and punish people. As he declares of ghosts and spirits:

It is right to think that ghosts and spirits are able to reward the worthy and punish the wicked. If this could be established at the outset in the state and among the ten thousand people, it would truly be the way to bring order to the state and benefit to the ten thousand people.<sup>63</sup>

And as he states of Heaven:

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<sup>62</sup> Johnston, 251.

<sup>63</sup> Johnston, 297.

Moreover, I declare that for the murder of one innocent person, there will surely be one misfortune. Who is it that murders the innocent person? It is man. Who is it that sends down misfortune? It is Heaven.<sup>64</sup>

Not only does he imbue ghosts and spirits with the power to reward and punish, but Heaven, too, punishes the wicked murderer by sending him misfortunate. All told, considering Heaven and spirits and ghosts fill the same role, if Mozi finds spirits and ghosts unnecessary in determining the rightness of an act, then Heaven must be equally insignificant in moral considerations.

**Response 2:** Quite simply, because Mozi felt as though he needed to prove the existence of ghosts and spirits and did not need to prove the existence of Heaven, it must have been that there were plenty of people who believed in Heaven without believing in ghosts and spirits. If people believed in one and not the other, then the two must not be equivalent in the way the objector suggests. This separation of Heaven from ghosts and spirits helps, at least on an initial level, to quell the objection. Mozi confirms this separation, stating:

The ghosts of ancient and modern times are the same. There are the ghosts of Heaven, there are the ghosts and spirits of the mountains and rivers, and there are also the ghosts of people who have died.<sup>65</sup>

Here, because Mozi distinguishes between Heaven's ghosts and other ghosts, it is made clear that not all ghosts are so closely associated with Heaven, thereby supporting the separation between Heaven and ghosts and spirits.

Furthermore, while, like Heaven, ghosts and spirits can reward and punish, it seems that ghosts and spirits are rewarding and punishing people based on the will of Heaven. One scholar makes this point clearer, stating:

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<sup>64</sup> Johnston, 220.

<sup>65</sup> Johnston, 303.

It is also to be remarked that, for Mo-tze, the will of Heaven alone is to be obeyed and to be considered as the standard of morality; not so the will of spirits and ghosts, although they are to be worshipped. Indeed, they can punish and reward men's conduct; but they must reward those who have obeyed the will of Heaven and punish those who have disobeyed It.<sup>66</sup>

This point is corroborated by Mozi's own writings. He tells the story of a king named Jie, who "was enobled as the Son of Heaven and enriched with all under Heaven;"<sup>67</sup> but this king was soon corrupted. As Mozi goes on to state:

...he abused Heaven and insulted the ghosts above, and he brought calamity and death to the ten thousand people of the world below.... It was because of this that Heaven sent Tang to effect its clearly recognizable punishment.... Nevertheless, he was not able to ward off the punishment of the ghosts and spirits.<sup>68</sup>

Here, Mozi seems to suggest that Heaven is the authority regarding *whom* to punish, while the ghosts and spirits do the actual punishing. This further solidifies the separation between the two, thereby refuting the objection.

**Objection 3:** Mozi vehemently condemns fatalism in his work *Against Fate*, as has been previously presented. Of Heaven, however, Mozi states:

If I do what Heaven desires, Heaven will also do what I desire. ... If I do not do what Heaven desires, but do what Heaven does not desire, then I will lead the ordinary people of the world to land themselves in misfortune and calamity in the conduct of affairs.<sup>69</sup>

This selection suggests that, if I do what Heaven wants, then I will get what I want. As such, it seems as though my individual happiness, or the satisfaction of my desires, is dependent upon Heaven. If it is true that Heaven has such power as to determine my happiness or unhappiness, then the results of Mozi as a divine command theorist are the same as fatalism. What motivation do I have to do good things if, ultimately, everything

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<sup>66</sup> Tseu, 148.

<sup>67</sup> Johnston, 299.

<sup>68</sup> Johnston, 301.

<sup>69</sup> Johnston, 235.

happens in accordance with the will of Heaven? As such, if Mozi condemns fatalism so harshly, then he must not view Heaven as possessing such a fatalistic level of moral authority.

**Response 3:** Unlike the objector claims, Heaven does not have control of an individual's life; ultimately, the individual does. As the selection presented states, Heaven will do as I desire *if* I do as Heaven desires. Under this conception of the relationship between man and Heaven, I am still an active participant, and may change my fate based on how I act. One scholar makes this point clear, stating:

For Mo Tzu a bad situation can be made better: man is capable of improving himself and his world if he understands the ways of Heaven and follows them.<sup>70</sup>

Considering Heaven is only responding to my own actions, my own actions are still relevant in the determination of my own happiness and, thus, I am in control of my own fate. As such, the role of Heaven as a moral authority does not produce results akin to fatalism.

*Reasons for Obeying Heaven:*

Having been unable to find a reason to dismiss Heaven as a mere method of connection to the people, irrelevant to Mozi's moral theory, or fatalistic, we must accept Heaven as an incredibly sincere and relevant figure of authority in Mozi's work.

Accepting this, our only option is to analyze Heaven's will as an established force to be obeyed. Here, we are finally brought to the second option: accept Heaven and reevaluate.

In order to proceed in our analysis, then, we must uncover why, in fact, Mozi thinks we should obey Heaven. If we find that Heaven should be obeyed simply because Heaven, being a higher power, is the correct moral authority, then Mozi remains a divine

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<sup>70</sup> Rodney L. Taylor, "Religion and Utilitarianism: Mo Tzu on Spirits and Funerals," *Philosophy East and West*, 29, no. 3 (1979): 340.

command theorist. However, if we are able to establish that Mozi presents alternative reasons to obey Heaven which are incompatible with a divine command interpretation, then Mozi must appeal to some moral principle beyond Heaven's will. To this end, I will evaluate four reasons that Mozi presents for obeying Heaven, first presenting these reasons, and then evaluating them from a divine command perspective to determine if they are incompatible:<sup>71</sup>

**Reason 1:** We should obey Heaven because it rewards and punishes us accordingly. As Mozi states:

Thus, those who hate people and harm people, who oppose Heaven's intention, and who get Heaven's punishments can be recognized and known."<sup>72</sup> And: "Thus, those who love people and benefit people, who comply with Heaven's intention, and who get Heaven's rewards can be recognized and known."<sup>73</sup>

It seems here, that in order to get rewards and avoid punishments, we must obey Heaven's will. As such, if Heaven did not administer rewards and punishments, there may be no morally-relevant reason for me to obey Heaven's will. As such, it *could* be that Heaven's authority is dependent only upon my desire to get rewarded and fear of punishment and not on the basis that Heaven should be recognized as a figure of authority in itself.

**Reason 2:** We should obey Heaven because Heaven is wise and noble. As Mozi states:

...I know that righteousness does not come from the foolish and base, but must come from the noble and the wise. If this is so, then who is noble? Who is wise? I

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<sup>71</sup> Note that each of the reasons presented is not intended as an individual argument to dismiss the divine command theory; they are merely descriptions of what Mozi offers as an explanation for obeying Heaven and suggestions of what this might imply for the divine command interpretation. There is one reason, presented last, that *does* seem incompatible with the divine command theory, which is intended to serve as an argument towards the view that Mozi is actually a consequentialist.

<sup>72</sup> Johnston, 259.

<sup>73</sup> Johnston, 257.

say Heaven is noble, Heaven is wise, and that is all. In that case, then, righteousness undoubtedly comes from Heaven.<sup>74</sup>

According to this formulation, righteousness comes from Heaven because Heaven is wise and noble. This, presumably, is because, being noble and wise, Heaven is most able to determine that which is righteous. Heaven may not be able to determine that which is noble and wise, however, but merely act upon its own nobility and wisdom. As such, we could assume that if Heaven were not wise and noble, then righteousness might not come from Heaven and, thus, we would not be obligated to follow Heaven's will. Perhaps, then, Heaven's moral authority *may* depend upon a separate value.

**Reason 3:** We should obey Heaven because it has blessed us, and we should repay it. As Mozi states:

Now, in fact, Heaven is universal in its love for [the people of] the world. It brings to fruition the ten thousand things to benefit them. Even something as small as the tip of a hair is created by Heaven. So what the people gain and benefit can, then, be called substantial. Nevertheless, they still do not repay Heaven and do not know they are not being benevolent and good. This is what I mean when I say that gentlemen are clear about small matters, but not clear about great matters.<sup>75</sup>

Much like Reason 1, we should obey Heaven because it has given us many good things which we should be thankful for. To show Heaven our appreciation, we should follow Heaven's will. If Heaven had not bestowed us with these blessings, we might not owe Heaven anything and, thus, may not be responsible for obeying Heaven's will. As such, Heaven *may* not a moral authority in any real sense, but could possibly be only a powerful being that we must obey out of obligation, as one would pay for services rendered.

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<sup>74</sup> Johnston, 245.

<sup>75</sup> Johnston, 253.

Divine command theorists provide a similar response to each of these first three reasons. Quite simply, none are incompatible with a divine command interpretation. Essentially, Mozi can maintain both that these are reasons for obeying Heaven *and* remain a divine command theorist. Several scholars, in particular Daniel Johnson, have done significant work in examining these reasons, ultimately arguing for the divine command interpretation. These responses are generally formulated in the following ways:

**To Reason 1:** Though an ability to reward or punish may serve to encourage me to obey Heaven's will, these are mere incentives. Consider, for example, that I know a fellow student intends to cheat on a test. I tell this student that I will report him to the professor if he cheats on the test, so he decides not to cheat. While this punishment provides a good reason for the student to not cheat, it is not this punishment which makes the cheating a wrong action; this is done by some other moral principle. Heaven works the same way – its rewards and punishments are reasons to do or not do some act, but that act is independently determined morally right or wrong according to Heaven's will.

**To Reason 2:** Heaven's wisdom and nobility are also compatible with a divine command interpretation of Mozi's philosophy. In fact, establishing a higher being as both wise and noble is a frequent feature of certain theories of divine command, in particular that of Robert Adams. As he claims, when a divine command theorist holds that we should follow God's commands, that theorist conceives of God as a loving being; and, furthermore, that, "Any action is ethically wrong if and only if it is contrary to the commands of a loving God."<sup>76</sup> As such, Mozi's Heaven can be wise and noble, as well as compatible with a divine command interpretation.

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<sup>76</sup> Robert Adams, *Finite and Infinite Goods: A Framework for Ethics*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1999), 132.

**To Reason 3:** Though it seems possible to respond to this third reason as we have the others, quite simply, it does not seem that Mozi identifies this ‘thankfulness’ as a reason to obey Heaven at all. According to the selection, it seems that he merely encourages us to recognize Heaven’s blessings and be appreciative, failing to provide any indication of an obligation to do so. As Johnson claims in the following response:

...we could insist that the distinction between the good and the right is sufficient to deal with this passage, because it could just be saying that it is *good* for people to obey out of gratitude, not that they somehow *owe* obedience or have an obligation to obey out of gratitude.<sup>77</sup>

This being true, Reason 3 does not provide a strong, independent reason to obey Heaven and, thus, can be dismissed as a residual feature of a divine command theory.

**Reason 4:** There is, however, another reason Mozi provides for obeying Heaven – a reason which is notably incompatible with a divine command interpretation. That is: we should obey Heaven’s will, but only because obeying Heaven’s will brings about the best consequences. As such, the will of Heaven is only a means to a consequentialist goal. Therefore, the basis of Mozi’s conception of morality depends more fundamentally upon a consequentialist principle than one of divine command. Under this formulation, “Heaven wills what is right because it is right. It is not right because Heaven wills it.”<sup>78</sup>

As Mozi states:

If the world has righteousness, then it is well ordered. If there is not righteousness, then it is in disorder. This is how I know that righteousness is correct.<sup>79</sup>

And, furthermore:

So then, Heaven desires [the world’s] ‘life’ and abhors its ‘death’. It desires its wealth and abhors its poverty. It desires its order and abhors its disorder. This is how I know that Heaven desires righteousness and abhors unrighteousness.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Johnson, 352-53.

<sup>78</sup> Johnson, 350.

<sup>79</sup> Johnston, 263.

And, lastly:

Nowadays, if the gentlemen of the world truly wish in their hearts to comply with the Way and benefit the people, they must start by examining the basis of benevolence and righteousness, and, in doing this, they cannot but comply with Heaven's intention.<sup>81</sup>

Taken together, these selections indicate the following: (1) righteousness is correct because it brings about order, wealth, and life (2) unrighteousness is wrong because it brings about disorder, poverty, and death (3) Heaven desires order, wealth, and life (4) therefore, Heaven's will is righteousness (5) if I want to be righteous, then I should follow Heaven's will. This formulation highlights the relationship between following Heaven's will and resulting order, wealth, and life. As such, Heaven's will is essentially a guide to good consequences.

Furthermore, Mozi holds that those who want to benefit the people should examine the basis of righteousness, thereby reasserting the connection between the promotion of benefits and righteousness. Considering that the promotion of order, wealth, and life is also righteous, these can all be considered benefits to the people. Further, as benefits to the people *are* good consequences – the only difference being in terminology – then following Heaven's will can be said to result in good consequences. This conclusion is supported by other selections from Mozi's work, all of which demonstrate that following Heaven's will causes good. For example:

Therefore, only when there is clear compliance with Heaven's intention, and obedience to Heaven's intention is widely practiced in the world, will the administration be well ordered, the ten thousand people harmonious, the country wealthy, materials for use sufficient, and the ordinary people all obtain warm clothes and enough food so they will be at peace and free from anxiety.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Johnston, 235.

<sup>81</sup> Johnston, 251.

<sup>82</sup> Johnston, 249.

And:

Therefore, in ancient times, the sage kings were clear in their knowledge of what Heaven and ghosts gave their blessings to, and avoided what Heaven and ghosts detested. In this way, they sought to promote Heaven's benefits and eliminate Heaven's harms. And so Heaven made cold and heat moderate, the four seasons blend, the *yin* and *yang* interchange, rain and dew timely, the five grains ripen, the six animals thrive, and sickness, disaster, pestilence and famine not occur.<sup>83</sup>

To this point, it has been made clear that it is both our obligation to follow Heaven's will and that following Heaven's will results in good consequences. However, it could be that these good consequences are merely a side-effect of obeying Heaven, not a justification for it. Under this formulation, Mozi could still be a divine command theorist, just one whose divine commands incidentally produce good results. If we are able to eliminate the ambiguity regarding Heaven and claim that Heaven actively intends to produce good consequences, then perhaps it can be established that Heaven itself is subject to a consequentialist principle. For, if Heaven desires to produce good consequences, then it must appeal to consequentialism in order to justify willing particular actions. Under this formulation, according to Heaven itself, the right action is that which produces good consequences. Thus, the rightness of the action is not dependent on Heaven as much as it is on this consequentialist criterion, as Heaven appears to appeal to the criterion as well. In this way, it becomes evident that the consequentialist principle is more foundational than that of Heaven's will.

Even Mill supports this classification<sup>84</sup>, claiming that:

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<sup>83</sup> Johnston, 251.

<sup>84</sup> While this is an attempt to classify Mozi as a consequentialist, not a utilitarian, this selection is still relevant. The quote presented does not extrapolate upon any feature specific of utilitarianism except the nature of utility which, taken generally, entails good consequences. As such, while utilitarianism specifies what this good is, such a classification is not essential to the meaning of the selection.

If it be a true belief that God desires, above all things, the happiness of his creatures...utility is not only not a godless doctrine, but more profoundly religious than any other. If it be meant that utilitarianism does not recognize the revealed will of God as the supreme law of morals, I answer that a utilitarian who believes that whatever God has thought fit to reveal on the subject of morals must fulfill the requirements of utility in a supreme degree.<sup>85</sup>

Here, Mill makes clear that, if God desires happiness for people, then God is making an appeal to the principle of utility, emphasizing that religion and utilitarianism are not necessarily separate. The same formulation, if true of utilitarianism, must be true of consequentialism as well. Therefore, if it can be demonstrated that Heaven actively intends good consequences, then Heaven, too, must appeal to a consequentialist principle.

The evidence of Heaven's intent for good consequences is very apparent in Mozi's work. As demonstrated by several of the selections presented, Heaven is said to *desire* life, wealth, and order, it "desires righteousness,"<sup>86</sup> and "if I do not do what Heaven desires, but do what Heaven does not desire, then I will lead the ordinary people of the world to land themselves in misfortune and calamity."<sup>87</sup> Even more pointed is the following selection from Mozi:

Undoubtedly what Heaven desires is that there be mutual love and mutual benefit among people. What it does not desire is that there be mutual hatred and mutual harm among people. How do we know that Heaven desires mutual love and mutual benefit among people and does not desire mutual hatred and mutual harm among people? Because it is universal in loving them and universal in benefiting them.<sup>88</sup>

In these sections, Johnston translates 'desire' from the character '欲,' which, to put in context, is used in such sentences as: "然則天亦何欲何惡?," or, "What does Heaven

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<sup>85</sup> Mill, 22.

<sup>86</sup> Johnston, 233.

<sup>87</sup> Johnston, 235.

<sup>88</sup> Johnston, 27.

desire and what does it abhor?"<sup>89</sup> According to modern dictionaries, the character 欲 directly refers to 'desire' or 'want.' It is used, for example, in the following: 攥着刀把儿, 你也不能为所欲为 (Even though you are in power, you can't just do whatever you want), or, 贪婪的欲望使他变成了一个疯人 (His desires made him a madman); and is part of the phrase, 为所欲为, which means to do what one wants.<sup>90</sup> As such, we can be fairly confident in reading this use of desire in a normal, conversational manner and, therefore, conclude that Heaven actively desires and intends to produce good consequences. In understanding that Heaven wants good consequences, and wants others to produce good consequences, Heaven's appeal to the consequentialist principle is made apparent.

To make this jump even clearer, take, for example, the Christian conception of God. Perhaps it could be said that God *wants* people to recognize his son as their savior. Being, arguably, benevolent, he too wants his people to live good lives and experience good consequences, but this is an indirect want, perhaps an indirect result of belief in Jesus. Mozi's Heaven, however, is chiefly concerned with the benefits of the people and good consequences. Thus, when Heaven *wants*, it specifically wants its people to be benefited. This demonstrates that, at its core, Heaven is a consequentialist being which appeals to a consequentialist criterion in determining which actions to will.

This conclusion, in fact, is supported by the entirety of Mozi's work. Frequently, scholars of Mozi are criticized for being too selective of his theories, picking his work

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<sup>89</sup> Johnston, 232.

<sup>90</sup> NCIKU Dictionary, "欲." Last modified 2013. <http://www.nciku.com/search/zh/detail/欲/1318702>.

apart and ignoring those sections which don't conform to a set conclusion. As such, the strength of this response is that it is corroborated by Mozi's overall intention and motivation. Mozi is, as has been stated, chiefly concerned with practical results and benefit over harm. While he is also a notably religious man, he never appeals to Heaven in the following chapters: *Universal Love*, *Condemning Offensive Warfare*, *Moderation in Funerals*, *Condemning Music*, and *Against Fate*. Notably, these are the only chapters in which Mozi addresses and justifies specific moral requirements.

Supporting this are Mozi's recorded conversations with various opponents to his theories. In this section, when defending his moral requirements, Mozi yet again appeals only to benefits and harms. Take, for example, this selection from his dialogue with a Confucian, which references Mozi's condemnation of music:

Master Mo Zi questioned a Confucian, asking him: "Why make music?" [The Confucian] replied: "Music is for the purpose of music." Master Mo Zi said: "You have not yet answered my question. If I ask you, 'Why make a house?' and you say, 'To keep out the cold in winter and the heat in summer, and also to maintain a separation between men and women,' then this is telling me what a house is for. Now, when I ask you 'Why make music?', you say, 'Music for the purpose of music'. This is like saying, when I ask 'Why make a house?', that 'A house is for the purpose of a house'.<sup>91</sup>

Instead of appealing to Heaven's will as a defense against the skepticism of the Confucian, Mozi demonstrates his reason for condemning music through an analogy: houses, unlike music, have obvious benefits – to protect from the elements and separate the sexes. The Confucian cannot tell Mozi the benefits of music, which, to him, highlights why it should be condemned.

This is revealing. While Mozi does make a number of broad statements about the authority of Heaven's will, when it comes to application and justification of his moral

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<sup>91</sup> Johnston, 689.

requirements, he depends only upon the import of consequences. As such, it seems that Mozi considers the consequentialist appeal much more persuasive. This is the standard by which he judges the everyday actions of the common man, requiring that people embrace mutual love, avoid offensive warfare, moderate funerals, and engage neither in music nor fatalistic behaviors. These are Mozi's moral requirements, and each is justified without a single mention of Heaven's intention.

Taking this argument in its entirety, it now seems fairly clear that the consequentialist principle is more foundational to Mozi's theory of ethics than is Heaven's intention. Having reached this conclusion, only one question remains: if Heaven did *not* desire good consequences, would the standard of rightness still be good consequences, or would it be Heaven's will?

On a basic level, it is clear that Heaven's desire for benefit is inseparably integral to Mozi's work. At first, it is difficult to conceive of Mozi even considering this question. Delving slightly deeper, however, it may be that our answer has already been provided by the preceding argument. Most notably, considering the overwhelming importance of the consequentialist principle to Mozi's theories and seemingly secondary appeal to Heaven, Mozi likely favors good consequences as a standard of rightness. Even deeper, on the most foundational level, we must look again to the text, which offers support for this conclusion. As Mozi declares in his chapter on *Valuing Righteousness*:

Any statements, any actions that are beneficial to Heaven, to ghosts, or to the ordinary people should be put into effect. Any statements, any actions that are harmful to Heaven, to ghosts, or to the ordinary people should be set aside.<sup>92</sup>

Here, clearly, the underlying principle is that of consequentialism. If anything that is good for anyone, *including* Heaven, is a right act, and anything that is harmful to anyone,

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<sup>92</sup> Johnston, 663.

*including* Heaven, is a wrong act, then truly, all of us, including Heaven, are subject to consequentialism. As such, it seems that it is Heaven's moral responsibility to promote good consequences whether it desires to or not, just like ordinary people. This being the case, if Heaven did *not* desire good consequences, Heaven could justifiably be said to be acting in a morally wrong manner. Now, Mozi's answer to the question is clear: if even Heaven can theoretically commit a morally wrong act, then it is subject to a consequentialist principle, and, thus, good consequences are always the primary standard of rightness.

*Conclusion:*

It is now apparent that Mozi espouses a distinctly consequentialist theory: not only does he clearly appeal to consequences as a tool of moral evaluation, but this appeal serves as the foundational criterion for determining the rightness of an action. This has been demonstrated, first, by an evaluation of Mozi's work on funerals, fatalism, war, and music, all of which he condemns for notably pragmatic reasons. Furthermore, while Heaven has proven to be a relevant moral authority in Mozi's work, it, too, is beholden to a consequentialist goal, for, as shown, even this higher power is subject to a consequentialist principle.

***III: Utilitarianism, as compared to Consequentialism***

In order to classify Mozi as a utilitarian, we must first examine distinctions made between this theory and consequentialism, so that it is clear what qualifications he must meet. According to our previous definition, consequentialism holds that the moral rightness of an act depends on its consequences. Utilitarianism, being a kind of consequentialism, requires specification: it is agent-neutral – as previously discussed –

seeks to maximize the ‘good,’ and conceives of this ‘good’ in terms of pleasure or happiness. In the discussion that follows, I will illuminate my reasons for selecting these qualifications.

It should be clarified that I am comparing the Mohist theory specifically to classical utilitarianism.<sup>93</sup> Bentham and Mill, developers of this approach, were concerned primarily with legal and social reform. Mozi seems to have similar motives, as is evident in our understanding of his life and philosophical context. Like Bentham and Mill, Mozi hoped to see corrupt laws and social practices changed. Specifically, Mozi was concerned with the “social and moral ills of his time,” and tried to “attack the abuses of the feudal aristocrats and literati.”<sup>94</sup> Clearly in the spirit of this original utilitarian motivation, it must be demonstrated that Mozi prescribes the same moral cure to these social ills.

*Agent-Neutrality:*

As previously discussed, agent-neutrality is a feature which one could include under the broader scope of consequentialism, but which I reserved as a utilitarian qualification for two reasons: it is widely argued, by Mill and others, that agent-neutrality is a distinguishing feature of utilitarianism, and because there is no other convincing reason to necessarily disclude this feature. Supporting this conclusion are the various consequentialist theories which function without an agent-neutral principle. For a more complete discussion of these reasons, refer to the earlier sub-section, *What is*

*Consequentialism?, of Mozi: The Consequentialist.*

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<sup>93</sup> Considering that classical utilitarianism is closely tied to the specific time and place of its conception, therefore being difficult to replicate, I hope to demonstrate that Mozi is *similar* to the classical utilitarian theory and bases his theory on the same foundational principles, even if he cannot match it identically due to a difference of time and place.

<sup>94</sup> Watson, 5.

In terms of explaining what, in fact, is meant by agent-neutrality, Mill makes the following claim:

...the happiness which forms the utilitarian standard of what is right in conduct is not the agent's own happiness but that of all concerned. As between his own happiness and that of others, utilitarianism requires him to be as strictly impartial as a disinterested and benevolent spectator.<sup>95</sup>

As such, we can conceive of agent-neutrality as a disregard for distinction between persons in evaluating moral responsibilities or the moral rightness of an action.

Naturally, this applies both to oneself, as well as others, "for the standard is not the agent's own greatest happiness, but the greatest amount of happiness altogether."<sup>96</sup>

Mill elaborates on this point, claiming that, while the happiness of each individual may aggregate to produce a greater happiness, it is important to consider the good of the society as a whole. As he states:

...establish in the mind of every individual an indissoluble association between his own happiness and the good of the whole, especially between his own happiness and the practice of such modes of conduct, negative and positive, as regard for the universal happiness prescribes.<sup>97</sup>

Bentham supports this interpretation of agent-neutrality, holding that, while the happiness of the individual is significant in so far as he is a member of the whole...:

An action then may be said to be conformable to the principle of utility, or, for shortness sake, to utility, (meaning with respect to the community at large) when the tendency it has to augment the happiness of the community is greater than any it has to diminish it.<sup>98</sup>

*Maximization of the Good:*

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<sup>95</sup> Mill, 17.

<sup>96</sup> Mill, 11.

<sup>97</sup> Mill, 17.

<sup>98</sup> Jeremy Bentham, *The Principles of Morals and Legislation*, (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1988), chap. I, 4.

Another distinct feature of utilitarianism is its goal of maximizing the good. While the consequentialist simply supports an act which produces good consequences, utilitarianism, specifically, declares the right act that which produces the best consequences. Specifically, Mill refers to the principle of utility as the “greatest happiness principle,”<sup>99</sup> stating that the utilitarian standard refers to “the greatest amount of happiness altogether.”<sup>100</sup> This is a fairly standard feature of classical utilitarianism.

*Defining the Good:*

While general consequentialism leaves the definition of ‘good consequences’ fairly open to interpretation, utilitarianism specifies what the ‘good’ is. This is demonstrated by the variety of consequentialist philosophers, ranging from hedonistic to pluralistic, who define the good in equally varied ways. The utilitarian, however, must fit a more specific interpretation. Pettit makes clear this difference, stating that:

An act-utilitarian is, according to the prevalent conception, an act-consequentialist with a particular view about how states of affairs are to be impersonally ranked: roughly speaking, the goodness of states of affairs depends only on the well-being, happiness, satisfaction, utility, or desire-fulfillment of the individuals who exist in those states of affairs and one state of affairs is better than another just in case it contains a greater sum of individual utilities, or a greater overall balance of satisfaction over dissatisfaction.<sup>101</sup>

He stipulates that utilitarians and consequentialists would be the same were it not for certain characteristics, one of which is the conception of the good. Furthermore, Pettit’s definition of the good as dependent upon well-being, happiness, satisfaction, utility, or desire-fulfillment, highlights the nature of this distinction.

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<sup>99</sup> Mill, 7.

<sup>100</sup> Mill, 11.

<sup>101</sup> Philip Pettit, and Michael Slote, "Satisficing Consequentialism," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Volumes*, 58 (1984): 139.

According to Mill, the good, termed ‘utility,’ is defined in terms of happiness, which is created by promoting pleasure and reducing pain. As he states:

The creed which accepts as the foundation of morals “utility” or the “greatest happiness principle” holds that actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness; wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness. By happiness is intended pleasure and the absence of pain, unhappiness, pain and the privation of pleasure.<sup>102</sup>

Bentham agrees with Mill, claiming:

By utility is meant that property in any object whereby it tends to produce benefit, advantage, pleasure, good, or happiness...or...to prevent the happening of mischief, pain, evil, or unhappiness to the party whose interest is considered. According to the tendency it appears to have to augment or diminish the happiness of the party whose interest is in question: or, what is the same thing in other words to promote or to oppose that happiness.<sup>103</sup>

Though seemingly more general in his definition of utility, Bentham states at the beginning of his introduction to the *Principles of Morals and Legislation* that man is governed chiefly by pleasure and pain, and seems to emphasize ‘happiness,’ specifically, as a significant goal.<sup>104</sup> As such, it seems clear that both Mill and Bentham consider happiness, as determined by levels of pleasure or pain, to encapsulate the ‘good.’

#### ***IV: Mozi, the Utilitarian***

Now, to evaluate if Mozi conforms to these utilitarian qualifications:

##### ***Agent-Neutrality:***

In order to demonstrate that Mozi’s work maintains a sense of agent-neutrality we need only to look again at his classic formulation of universal love, or ‘兼爱’ – his usage of the term has even been translated by several scholars to mean “impartial concern,”<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Mill, 55.

<sup>103</sup> Bentham, chap. I, 3.

<sup>104</sup> Bentham, chap. I.

<sup>105</sup> Philip J. Ivanhoe, (Regarding Mozi's Moral Philosophy), interview by Grace Mendenhall, Record, October 25, 2011.

or, as previously discussed, ‘simultaneous care for individuals.’ While we have already discussed his conclusion to the theory, specifically, benefits and harms, an examination of the premises of the argument highlight a fundamentally agent-neutral spirit. To refresh, Mozi states:

Nowadays, individual people know only to love their own person and not to love the persons of others, so they have no qualms about promoting their own person and injuring the persons of others... In this case, then, what are the methods of universal love and exchange of mutual benefit? Master Mo Zi said: “People would view others’ states as they view their own states. People would view others’ houses as they view their own houses. People would view other people as they view themselves.”<sup>106</sup>

In classifying strangers to be as significant as one’s own family, foreign states as important as one’s own, and, essentially, to consider others as oneself, Mozi makes clear his position that benefits and love should be promoted for all people, regardless of personal relationships. This interpretation is similar to Bentham, as well as Mill, who, as previously stated, hold that any actor must be strictly “impartial and disinterested.” This implies, as Mozi seems to suggest, that others, self, and family must be equal in moral consideration. Ultimately, Mozi claims, this concern for others as oneself will be returned in benefit, thereby creating a system in which benefits beget benefits. This is akin to the utilitarian perspective that the promotion of individual utility will aggregate, contributing to a greater whole utility. Furthermore, Mozi, in his attempts to prevent war, provide for the common people, and reduce harm, consistently appeals to the good of the society as a whole. Bentham and Mill, in their attempts to improve government and society, make similar appeals to the improvement of the collective, hoping this can be achieved through an agent-neutral position of moral consideration.

Even Heaven emphasizes the importance of agent-neutrality. As Mozi writes:

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<sup>106</sup> Johnston, 137-38.

I say that to comply with Heaven's intention is to be universal. To oppose Heaven's intention is to be discriminating.<sup>107</sup>

This selection is followed by a list of various kinds of people, ranging from robbers to kings, all of whom Mozi sets in contrast, claiming that the strong should not abuse the weak. In the context of the quote above, Mozi is suggesting that, while many people of differing circumstances live in the world, they should not be treated any differently. In condemning discrimination, Heaven demonstrates that all of these people should be considered equally. As such, every individual is to be viewed identically in moral considerations or, as Mozi puts it, universally. Thus, Heaven, too, supports the promotion of benefits impartially concerned.

This conclusion is supported by the tendency of Mozi's theory of universal love to succumb to the same critiques launched against classical utilitarianism. According to Mill:

...those among them [objectors to utilitarianism] who entertain anything like a just idea of its disinterested character sometimes find fault with its standard as being too high for humanity. They say it is exacting too much to require that people shall always act from the inducement of promoting the general interests of society.<sup>108</sup>

Even Mill is aware of the lofty requirements of an agent-neutral theory: if, in a classic example, both your mother and a doctor on the verge of curing cancer are drowning in a pool, and you can only save one of them, you are morally required to save the doctor, who can bring about a much greater good with his cancer cure than your mother can. This, according to its critics, feels intuitively wrong, and is far too great a moral requirement of people, who naturally form personal relationships with specific individuals. In evaluating Mozi's theory of universal love, we can imagine the same

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<sup>107</sup> Johnston, 269.

<sup>108</sup> Johnston, 18.

problem occurring: if, as he says, we should regard another's family members as our own, the natural inclination we have towards our mother, as in the drowning situation, should be dismissed in moral consideration. After all, any individual should matter as much to me, at least in terms of promoting benefit and avoiding harm, as my mother. In fact, followers of the Zhuangzi, a Taoist and another of Mozi's philosophical peers, identified this imperative as an unintuitive and overly ambitious moral requirement:

The author of a late chapter of the *Zhuangzi*, commenting upon the dour Mohist philosophy which allows 'no signing in life, no mourning in death,' remarks: 'It causes the people to be anxious, to be sorrowful, and its ways are hard to follow.' This, we may suppose, was how most men of later centuries felt about the puritanical...elements of Mozi's teachings.<sup>109</sup>

This indicates that, like utilitarianism, Mohism faced criticism for its hard to follow requirements, which appear to be partly a result of a hope for universal love and equal promotion of benefits. Taken together, these selections suggest that Mozi's moral theory is agent-neutral.

#### *Maximization of the Good:*

In his chapter on *Choosing the Greater*, Mozi takes an initial step towards maximization through analogy, stating:

In terms of benefit, cutting off a finger to preserve the hand is to choose the greater [benefit]; in terms of harm, it is to choose the lesser [harm].<sup>110</sup>

While it seems that this goal of promoting the greater benefit is subtly present and represented throughout all of Mozi's work, it is, perhaps, made most evident by his passage on sage kings, which states:

In ancient times the sage-kings formulated laws which said, "No man of twenty should dare to remain single, no girl of fifteen should dare to be without her master." This was the law of sage-kings. Now that the sage-kings have passed

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<sup>109</sup> Watson, 13.

<sup>110</sup> Johnston, 581.

away, the people do what they want. Those who like to have a family early sometimes marry at twenty. Those who like to have a family later sometimes marry at forty. When the late marriages are made up by the early marriages, the average is still later by ten years than the legal age decreed by the sage-kings. Suppose there is one birth in three full years, then there would be two or three children born [by the time men now marry]. This does not only show that if people are caused to marry early, the population can be doubled.<sup>111</sup>

Here, Mozi discusses a social issue with an obvious tension between what individuals want for themselves and what is best for society, that being, population growth.

Individuals, in this case, want to marry later, thinking, naturally, that this is the action for them which produces the best result. By having a family later, perhaps they are able to pursue interests otherwise disallowed by marriage, or take more time to find a suitable spouse, or even amass greater wealth and success before starting a family. However, when the population declines, agricultural and textile production, among other necessities, plummets with it. As a result, the community is faced with inadequate resources and, inevitably, a cold and hungry winter.

Mozi's advocacy for the early marriage of individuals in order to bolster the population is a prime example of his choice of the greater over the few and, thus, the greater good over the lesser good. It is not enough that these individuals find later marriage to benefit them personally, for those desires are trumped by the greater good and the needs of the entire community over the few. Furthermore, even those who want to marry later and are prevented from doing so, while they may experience momentary harm, are more greatly benefitted in the long run, for they too would die without adequate resources. Thus, as under Mill, Mozi holds that the right action is that which promotes the greater good.

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<sup>111</sup> Chan, 226-27.

Several of Mozi's conversations with important officials and kings support this classification. These dialogues, as recorded by his followers, often begin with a question of why it is unrighteous for that leader to engage in a particular act. Mozi then proceeds to outline the balance of benefits and harms, demonstrating that, while the act might promote benefits for some, it is only right if it promotes the *greatest* benefit. One example is found in his section on *Lu's Questions*:

Prince Wen of Luyang spoke to Master Mo Zi, saying: "To the south of Chu there is the country, Qiao, in which the eating of people occurs. In that country, when the first son is born, he is eaten alive. This is said to be a protection for younger brothers. If he tastes good, then he is offered to the prince and if the prince is pleased, he rewards the father. How is this not an evil custom?"

Master Mo Zi replied: "Even in the customs of the central kingdom itself there is also something like this. For how is killing the father and rewarding the son different from eating the son and rewarding the father? If benevolence and righteousness are not practiced, how can there be censure of the barbarians for eating their sons?"<sup>112</sup>

This exchange occurred after Prince Wen asked several questions about attacking his neighbors and beginning a war. In this selection, Wen wants to wage a war against Qiao, which he thinks is a justifiable act because its people are cannibals and, thus, cause harm. By all accounts, this seems a fair and just reason to go to war – Wen probably pities the dying children and backwards people, hoping to help them. Mozi, however, still condemns the act, though not on the basis that Prince Wen is technically wrong. In fact, he seems to allow that cannibalism is harmful, and that Wen may bring benefit to some people in preventing its practice. However, because such a war would require the killing of numerous others, Wen's actions are no different from that of the cannibals – he, too, would cause great harm. Considering his response, it is assumed that Mozi can conceive of less harmful, more righteous and benevolent ways to condemn cannibalism than

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<sup>112</sup> Johnston, 706-7.

killing its practicing peoples. Here, he weighs the benefits and the harms of each option, ultimately promoting that which ensures the greatest good overall.

Based on these selections, I believe it is fairly well established that Mozi seeks to maximize the good. While, considering the context and style of Mozi's writing, it is a difficult classification to definitively claim, it is evident that Mozi always selects the *greatest* good of those options which he presents. While, of course, there may be more maximal options which he does not consider, he does seem to express clear concern for achieving the greatest good possible.

*Defining the Good:*

Here we have reached the crux of Mozi's qualification as a utilitarian. Though fairly clearly concerned with agent-neutrality and maximization of the good, Mozi's work is unspecific regarding his definition of the good. Frequently referring to the promotion of benefits and the removal of harms as that which is good, such terminology is not enough to connect Mozi's definition to happiness or pleasure. Considering the antiquated context and ambiguity of his writing, it is unsurprising that Mozi never explicitly clarifies what he means by 'benefit.' So, how does Mozi define 'benefit'? What is the 'good' for Mozi?

It seems that the most direct evidence Mozi supplies in answer are the examples he provides of such benefits. At various points in his work, he writes of multiple results of acts that he considers good, such as: adequate resources, fair weather, attentive and benevolent leadership, peace across nations, harmony, wealth, life, order, and freedom from stress or anxiety. Examples of harms, then, are opposites of those benefits mentioned: insufficient resources, poverty, and so on. While Mozi does not directly

reference happiness or pleasure, it seems that each of these benefits would naturally produce pleasure in an individual, thereby causing happiness. Mill, though he claims that providing examples of pleasure or pain “do not affect the theory of life on which this theory of morality is grounded,”<sup>113</sup> does hint at several: mental cultivation, for example, is considered pleasurable, while poverty, “in any sense implying suffering,”<sup>114</sup> is considered painful. In comparing these examples to those provided by Mozi, it is clear that Mill identifies causes of pleasure and pain analogous to Mozi’s benefits and harms. In this manner, it is evident that each conceives of the ‘good’ in a similar way.

There is also a brief passage in Mozi’s chapter, *On the Seven Misfortunes*, which is translated:

...when rewards and gifts cannot bring happiness, when penalties and punishments cannot bring fear – this is seventh misfortune.<sup>115</sup>

While the character Mozi uses here to mean happiness, 喜, is different from the one he takes to mean benefit, 效益, it is significant that he refers to happiness directly. As evidenced by previous selections, we know Heaven to distribute rewards which, according to Mozi, benefit the people. This is, of course, why he thinks we should be both grateful to and observant of Heaven’s will. By claiming that rewards produce both benefits and happiness, it is a natural step to relate benefits *to* happiness. Of course, while not all causes produce the same results every time, benefits and happiness are such colloquially interchangeable terms that Mozi’s intention was probably the same in each case. Though a subtle distinction, this connection of terminology solidifies the conception that Mozi classifies the good in terms of happiness and pleasure.

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<sup>113</sup> Mill, 7.

<sup>114</sup> Mill, 15.

<sup>115</sup> Johnston, 31.

While these points are subtle, only tenuously connecting Mozi's conception of the good with that of utilitarianism, the work of the neo-Mohists has come to support this conclusion. These followers of Mozi wrote *The Canons*, a set of brief statements on Mozi's teachings compiled between the late 4<sup>th</sup> and mid-3<sup>rd</sup> century BC. *The Canons*, though not written by Mozi himself, are relevant for their unique ability to clarify and extrapolate on the meaning of Mozi's original works. While it can be said that the neo-Mohists, writing in a different era and in a different context, should not be considered in this discussion, I believe they are the only answer when seeking clarification regarding this subtle point; a point which may only be considered necessary since the later surge of philosophical development and the need for such careful, specific definitions.

This point made, *The Canons* make explicit that, "'Benefit' is what one is pleased to get," and that, "'Harm' is what one dislikes getting."<sup>116</sup> This equation of benefit with being pleased and harm with dislike makes clear Mozi's conception of the good. As Mill and Bentham establish, happiness is achieved through pleasure and unhappiness through pain. Thereby, in equating benefit with 'pleasing results,' the neo-Mohists seem to agree that *pleasure* is what produces benefits. Similarly, in equating harm with results that one 'dislikes,' I believe it is equally appropriate to claim that Mozi would support the classification of the good as that which lessens pain or unhappiness, for these are the things we dislike.

### ***V: Mozi, the Rule-Utilitarian***

Having classified Mozi as a utilitarian, naturally, his theory is now susceptible to those traditional critiques posed to classical utilitarianism. As has been previously

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<sup>116</sup> A.C. Graham, *Later Mohist Logic, Ethics and Science*, (London: School of Oriental and African Studies, 1978), 48.

established, this is evidenced particularly by Mozi's theory of universal love, which promotes those unintuitive, morally demanding actions that have earned utilitarianism an infamous reputation amongst ethical theories. In response to these critiques, utilitarians responded with the development of rule-utilitarianism, which seemingly accommodates for these unintuitive acts while preserving the principle of utility. This process can be fully explained as follows:

There are two specific divisions within utilitarianism: act and rule. Act utilitarianism, which we have been discussing to this point, states that all actions should be individually judged according to the principle of utility. Whatever action at that moment produces the greatest utility is the right action. It is easy to run into problems in this theory, however. For example, if a peeping tom secretly looks in on someone changing but nobody, including that individual, ever finds out, under act utilitarianism it is a right action. The peeping tom gains utility and nobody else loses any utility if they never find out. However, this seems against our moral intuitions as well as our concept of justice. Beyond this even, it is easy to conceive of situations in which the action that produces the greatest consequence is unarguably horrific. Under act utilitarianism, lying, violating people's rights, etc. are acceptable in some circumstances, but the acts of lying or violation are not moral acts. Something seems wrong.

In response, rule utilitarianism was developed. This modification of the original theory judges actions in regard to a set of optimal rules rather than on an individual and circumstantial basis. The set of optimal rules is still composed of those rules which maximize utility, but individual acts, rather, are judged right or wrong according to their acceptability in regards to these rules. The rule is framed with respect to the greater good,

but our practice is informed immediately by the rule. In regards to the previous example, one might first ask, “What rules of conduct tend to promote the most happiness?” Allowing peeping toms to snoop does not tend to promote the most happiness and, therefore, a rule develops under which the actions of peeping toms are always considered morally wrong. This reasoning can be used to establish rules against the violation of people’s rights, lying, etc. (as mentioned previously) and is in alignment with common sense morality, unlike act utilitarianism.

Interestingly, it seems as though Mozi has preempted such critiques against act utilitarianism, instead developing a notably rule utilitarian theory of ethics. While difficult to prove considering the subtle nature of the distinction between act and rule utilitarianism, as well as the context and ambiguity of Mozi’s writing, his numerous condemnations of various acts and policy of pacifism and defense are notably rule utilitarian features of his work.

As to the first point, if we consider Mozi’s moral requirements in terms of rule utilitarianism, it must be established that the right action is that which is in accordance with an optimal rule. In condemning elaborate funerals, offensive warfare, music, and fatalism, it seems that Mozi may be doing exactly that. To declare a condemnation, as Mozi does, implies permanence, finality; unlike a mere disapproval, a condemnation is a forceful moral pronouncement meant to hold its followers to a strict standard. Mozi seems to make this clear as he begins the section on offensive warfare by stating:

In ancient times, kings, dukes and great men, if they genuinely desired success and abhorred failure, if they wished for peace and disliked danger, could not otherwise than condemn offensive warfare.... If this is valid, the gentlemen of the world should all know and condemn it, and call it unrighteous.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Johnston, 167.

This selection demonstrates Mozi's condemnation of offensive warfare, which is framed such that he allows for no exceptions to the moral requirement.<sup>118</sup> According to the passage, those who desire success and peace must condemn warfare; however, there is no rational man that does not desire success and peace for himself and his nation. Therefore, all men must condemn offensive warfare and label it unrighteous. As such, the only exception, the only reason to possibly engage in warfare, is if one did not desire success and peace, which is irrational. Mozi, however, knows that these irrational men exist in the world. As such, he makes frequent references to the disastrous mistakes of ancient, foolish kings who, corrupt and selfish, led their people into war in an attempt to persuade others that offensive warfare is a harmful course of action. Of course, Mozi could simply be interpreted as making a generalization that nevertheless has exceptions, which is consistent with act utilitarianism. However, Mozi never indicates what qualifies as a legitimate exception and, in fact, *always* advises against war, never acknowledging that there may be an exception to the rule.

Furthermore, Mozi was known to travel from kingdom to kingdom pleading with these kings not to go to war and spreading a message of pacifism.<sup>119</sup> This is evidenced by the conversations his disciples were able to record from these journeys, one of which transpires as follows:

Master Mo Zi spoke to Prince Wen of Luyang, saying: "Suppose [a prince] attacked his neighbouring states, killed their people, took their oxen and horses, rice and millet, goods and valuables.... Is this permissible?" Prince Wen of

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<sup>118</sup> Notably, Mozi did write a number of theses on *defensive* warfare. He has chapters on preparing against ladders, water, sudden attack, tunneling, and preparing the wall and gates, all of which detail defensive war tactics. Clearly, he was aware that warfare was rampant and, in order to best benefit the people, he must teach them how to defend themselves against aggressive nations.

<sup>119</sup> Watson, 1-2.

Luyang replied: “Indeed, when I look at things in the light of your words, then what the world speaks of as permissible is certainly not so.”<sup>120</sup>

Mozi considers this conclusion obvious because of the equally obvious costs of war. According to the text, “The benefit to the people from killing the people of Heaven is slight indeed! And calculate its costs!”<sup>121</sup> Here, it is made clear that Mozi is most directly concerned with the loss of human life that war inevitably entails. For him, there is no benefit that can outweigh these harms. As he claims: “If the loss to the other is even greater, then the lack of benevolence is even greater and the crime more serious.”<sup>122</sup> As such, in order to produce the most benefit for society as a whole, Mozi must condemn warfare in its entirety. To illustrate: war can potentially bring about more harm than benefit or more benefit than harm. Considering that the harm brought about by war can be so great and leaders so frequently make corrupt, misled decisions about war, one is more likely to prevent harm than discourage benefit by categorically denying the rightness of war.

This condemnation is, in essence, an optimal rule. As under rule utilitarianism, because war generally produces pain and, thus, unhappiness, establishing war as a morally wrong act will result in the greatest amount of happiness. Mozi follows the same logic in each of his moral condemnations: he first establishes that the act produces harm, and then proceeds to give examples of how it has been abused before finally condemning it. This process is very much in the spirit of rule utilitarianism; however, it is difficult to provide textual evidence that Mozi intends his condemnations as universal to the extent that they can be considered rules. This theory is merely an alternative interpretation of

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<sup>120</sup> Johnston, 705.

<sup>121</sup> Johnston, 185.

<sup>122</sup> Johnston, 167.

Mozi, which requires more development, but is certainly vaguely evident throughout his work.

The translation of Mozi's original works lends some support to this theory, translating condemnation from 非, which carries much of the force of its English counterpart. This character, commonly used to convey wrongness, blame, or illegality, can also be used in such sentences as: 我不让他去, 他**非**去不可, which means, 'I've tried to stop him, but he simply **has to** go,' or, 不行, 我**非**得走, which means, 'No, I **must** go,' or, 他**非**要我参加, which means, 'He **insists** that I take part.'<sup>123</sup> Thus, the term implies a certain level of requirement matched by the optimal rules of rule utilitarianism. Considering that Mozi *insists* that people *must* or *have to* not engage in war, it seems fair to assume that he does not intend to make exceptions to the requirement. If so, it could be claimed that Mozi's condemnation is, in fact, a rule and that he posits a proto- rule utilitarian theory.

## ***VI: The Future of Mozi***

This paper has attempted to detail and reveal Mozi, the man, Mozi, the consequentialist and, finally, Mozi, as the classical utilitarian he is. While an additional proposition that Mozi may preempt traditional utilitarian critiques and condone a rule utilitarian theory is fragile, each step in this process has been incredibly significant. At the beginning, Mozi was merely an ancient Chinese philosopher, only tenuously connected to the Western philosophical tradition. While many have attempted to establish a relationship between his work and that of the consequentialists, utilitarians, or divine command theorists, past scholarship has often misrepresented either Mozi or the

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<sup>123</sup> NCIKU Dictionary, "非(非)." Last modified 2013.  
<http://www.nciku.com/search/zh/detail/%E9%9D%9E/1304120>.

comparable Western theory. Now, having progressed deliberately and completely, analyzing the potential of each relationship, presenting numerous selections from the text, and assessing Mozi's theory as a whole, it can be concluded that Mozi qualifies as a classical utilitarian philosopher.

The import of this declaration is great. To say that an ancient Chinese philosopher, writing in 400 BC, came close to conceptualizing not only consequentialism, but the principle of utility, and perhaps even preempted traditional utilitarian critiques and approximated a theory approaching rule utilitarianism, is astounding. Mozi wrote these doctrines over 2,000 years before Hume and Bentham first began to formulate the theory, or Mill first published *Utilitarianism*.

There is much that both Western and Chinese philosophy can gain in an exchange of ideas, but each side resists: Westerners are unwilling to lend credence to Chinese philosophers and classify their pursuits as philosophical, while the Chinese strive to preserve a rich culture of literature and thought separate from the Western tradition.

In his essay on, *What Should Western Philosophy Learn from Chinese Philosophy?*, Van Norden identifies two perspectives we can adopt upon recognizing this gap between Chinese and Western philosophers. There is the radical view, which holds that Chinese philosophy offers a new, alternative attitude that could contribute to a revitalization of what they consider a failing Western tradition. Then, there is the moderate view, which does not see Western philosophy as a discipline in crisis, but maintains that Chinese philosophy has much to offer – in fact, not only do the Chinese

offer a unique, perhaps mind-opening and, thus, problem-solving outlook, its philosophy is relatable enough to be useful to Western philosophers.<sup>124</sup>

Each of these views, while different, emphasize the potential of an exchange of philosophical ideas. Indeed, reading Mozi has improved my understanding of utilitarianism, and vice versa. Furthermore, by attempting to analyze and assess Mozi's ambiguous, contextualized ancient Chinese view, my mind, trained in the Western philosophical tradition, has learned to make new connections, problem solve, and innovate, which is beneficial to any student of philosophy. In terms of Mozi specifically, Van Norden points out that:

Reading the debate between Confucians and Mohists in the light of the contemporary Western debate between utilitarians and their critics may both improve our understanding of early Chinese thought and inform current philosophic discussion.<sup>125</sup>

However, regardless of the topic, if an exchange between Chinese and Western philosophers can contribute to that universal question of how we should live our lives, it is of the utmost importance. I can only hope that this discussion of Mozi and utilitarianism has begun to accomplish this end.

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<sup>124</sup> Philip J. Ivanhoe, *Chinese Language, Thought, and Culture: Nivision and His Critics*, (Peru, Illinois: Carus Publishing Company, 1996), 235.

<sup>125</sup> Ivanhoe, 237.

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