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Editor's Introduction: Mohist Studies

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Translated by Carl Gene Fordham