Week 3: Mozi and Logic
Section 3: The Moral Reform Impasse and a Partial Solution to the Impasse

- The clash between Mozi and the Confucians/traditionalists produces an impasse because the utilitarian standard of the reform seem morally wrong to the traditionalist, because they justify immoral social practices.
- Traditionalists assume traditional moral norms are right – participating in an elaborate burial ceremony for one's parent simply *is* a moral behavior.
- Mozi's standard: 利害 *Lì-hài*[benefit-harm] to decide what is 義 *yì*[moral] entails something that conventional moralists must regard as immoral—hence they see it as an immoral standard.
- Traditionalists cannot be convinced by the Mohist argument that traditional burial ceremony is immoral
- Mohists are not sympathetic to their objection – traditionalists are presupposing that the traditional standard of morality is correct. Relying on learned moral attitudes is the problem; We must think about morality as if it could be improved by a reform
- The impasse: there is no way to convince someone with a different morality that a radically reformed one is correct
- In English, we mark the distinction Mozi assumes as that between *morality* and *mores*
- The Mohists, grasping the point of the Kai Shu example, seek a natural, region and time neutral, standard—one that would apply to all humans everywhere regardless of past traditions

- Partial moralities vs. universal moralities: the scope or extent of objects of moral concern
- Family partiality: scope of moral concern is limited to relatives; frequently championed by defenders of Confucianism.
- Mozi argues that partial moralities constrain their adherents to refrain from wishing everyone to share their morality. They reject themselves as a universal social morality. We can call these self-defeating mores.
- A familiar Western example is ethical egoism. The egoist *should* refrain from convincing others to be egoists—he will do better (achieve his ethical target better) if he convinces others to be altruistic and share with him
- Therefore, his ethical standards tell him not to advocate *egoism* as a moral *dào* for all to follow.
- Mozi's soldier story: if a Confucian, partial, family based, morality adherent is conscripted to go north to help build the Great Wall, what does his Confucian morality tell him about with whom he should entrust the care of his family?
- Any partial morality will sometimes justify promoting a more universal morality to others.
- Hence partial moralities are self-defeating as universal social *dào*s
- This gives us a non-question-begging way to find Confucian morality wanting, but not a way to justify specifically a consequential universal concern—Mozi's utilitarianism.