HKU03x Humanity and Nature in Chinese Thought

Week 3: Mozi and Logic.
Section 10: Logical Laws vs. Mozi's 法 FaMeasurement: Standards.

- Mozi's 法 *Fa*[Measurement: Standards] is often translated as 'law'. It is in fact a rival theory about the correct use of words—how to正名*zhèng-míng*[rectify names].
- Mozi talks about 3 法 *fa*[measurement standards] of 言*yan*[discourse:words].
- Mozi uses two different characters.
- One character is a tracking metaphor, 表*biao*[show:display].
    - A device for tracking the position of the sunrise and sunset.
    - Mozi was a carpenter, a craftsman - tools are his main source of examples.
    - Using the correct tools to fix the application of the word/term - What's upright? Use a plumb bob. What's square? Use a carpenter's square.
- You have a standard, with a physical operation which leads to a precise, measurement-like outcome (i.e. does not rely on intuition, but the operational measurement)
- To decide what is right, measure the amount of 利害 *li-hai*[benefit-harm].
- Mozi applies this to the concept of 神 *shén*[spirits] and 命 *mìng*[fate] and concludes our discourse should include 有*yǒu*[have] with the former and 無 *wú*[lack] with the latter.
- Mozi rejects Confucian passivity in waiting for 天 *tian*[nature:sky] to 命 *mìng*[fate] a ruler.

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- Mozi argues we ought to say *there is no* 命 *mìng* [fate].
- Mozi also applies this to ghosts and spirits.
    - It's best for our social *dào* to say there are ghosts and spirits.
- Mozi says we should use 利害 *Lì-hài* [benefit-harm] as the fundamental measurement for determining right and wrong.
- Implicitly, Mozi is rejecting intuition - you use an objective operational standard instead (6.50)
- 是 *Shì* [right] and 非 *fēi* [wrong], which also translate as *this* and *not that*, are distinguished by distinguishing 利害*lì-hài* [benefit-harm] .
- The distinction helps to signpost the *dàos* with 義 *yi* [moral] and 不*bu* [not] 義*yi* [moral].
- Core dispute between Mozi and the Confucians - the use of the word 義 *yi* [moral].
- One standard of correct language use - use the word the way you were taught it.
- Second standard - must be accessible to the eyes and ears of ordinary people.
- Third standard - put it into practice, into 政*zheng* [gov't policy] (a practical/pragmatic exercise)
- The standards are an alternative to using intuition or an appeal to authority.
- Ordinary people can see the benefit and naturally choose, *shi* [this:right] benefit over harm.