HKU03x Humanity and Nature in Chinese Thought

Week 3: Mozi and Logic
Section 11: Mozi's Agreements with Confucius (vs. Western Moral Psychology)

- Mozi's theory of 'Agreement with the Superior' - a theory on the origin and justification of government/social hierarchies.
- Superficially similar to the social contract theory of Thomas Hobbes.
- Mozi's psychological and social agreements with Confucianism
- In the West, logic inspired a tendency to psychological egoism - for Mozi and Confucius, humans are naturally social—inclined to find and follow social paths.
    - Mozi also sees natural social status hierarchies as based on merit.
    - We are all part of a publicly shared social 道 *dao*[path] with conventions governing the behavior of those in different social roles.
    - The main difference between Mozi and Confucius is Mozi's emphasis on the *consequential* result of this hierarchy and the accompanying conventional norms. We should choose the structure and role paths that increase the yield or benefit to all.
    - Mozi otherwise agrees with Confucius on the importance of the conventional roles and rituals in society.
    - For Mozi, morality is distinct from conventional mores in being the social *dào* selected by the natural measurement standard of 利害*lì-hài*[benefit-harm] .
- The difference between Mozi and Confucius metaethical - the source of legitimacy of these norms.
    - For Confucius, it's from tradition, convention, past history.
    - For Mozi, it's from 天 *tian*[nature:sky] , a natural standard of benefit.
- Mozi's role for the ruler includes bringing about a reform in conventions to get the greatest benefit.
    - What he proposes differs from a Hobbes' social contract theory.
- Hobbes' state of nature model: psychological egoism (6.00)
- In Hobbes state of nature, life is "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short."
- In Hobbes' social contract, you agree to support any strong King who will protect you and punish others under law, in this way egoistic selfish people will each benefit from this arrangement.

- Mozi ‘s model is different.
    - Mozi is not a psychological egoist.
    - In Mozi’s state of nature, war and disorder result from *disagreements* about 義 *yi*[morality.]
    - Mozi’s solution, then, is a method of unifying our differing conceptions of 義 *yi*[morality]
    - Mozi’s ruler sets up a social information gathering method - we all agree to select the wisest and best person in 天下*tian xia* (under heaven) and place them in the role of 天子*tian zi*[natural master.]
    - 天子*tian zi*[natural master] status is both deserved by his wisdom and goodness—and leads to the consequence that he can direct the project of harmonizing our conceptions of義 yimorality.
- This leads to a natural social order resulting in universal benefit.