HKU03x Humanity and Nature in Chinese Thought

Week 3: Mozi and Logic
Section 8: Moral Psychology: Detail and Example

- Contrasting with Mozi - an example of Aristotle's practical syllogism
- The practical syllogism is, as the name implies, *practical*, it's about choosing an action
- Why do I open the refrigerator door? According to Aristotle it's based on a reasoning with premises and conclusions
    - Premise 1 (a belief, that takes the if-then, law-like form)) "If I open the refrigerator door, I will find a sandwich."
    - Premise 2 (a desire premise): "I want to eat a sandwich."
    - Conclusion (a new desire): "I intend/desire to open the refrigerator door."
    - Thus, my beliefs and desires explain my actions.
- This reasoning to a 'desire' conclusion can ONLY be sound IF there is at least one 'desire' premise.
- Western tradition treats the desire as a subjective (only I can feel it) bodily state which we translate into a premise (a *value* sentence). The rational laws and factual premises, by contrast, are available to all rational beings—not subjective.
- So psychology is linked to Western mind-body dualism (the dualism between mind and body is related to the dualism between reason and desire—mind & heart).
- David Hume's conclusion: Reason is the "slave of the passions."

- Reason without desires is powerless to explain actions; desires imbue reason with the force needed to impel action.

- Psychological egoism: one's own physical desires cause all actions ∴ people are motivated only by self-interest.