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## Táng Jūnyì on Mencian and Mohist Conceptions of Mind

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### 1. Introduction

In a provocative 1955 study,<sup>1</sup> Táng Jūnyì 唐君毅 claims that the key to understanding the ethical thought of the *Mèngzǐ* 孟子 and the *Mòzǐ* 墨子 lies in the two texts' view of the *xīn* 心, or heart-mind. The philosophy of the *Mèngzǐ*, he suggests, is inspired by a conception of mind that he characterizes as a “dispositional-affective heart-mind” (性情心) or “virtue heart-mind” (德性心). That of the *Mòzǐ* is based on a “knowing heart-mind” (知識心) or “reasoning heart-mind” (理智心). The Mencian “dispositional-affective mind,” Táng contends, is the fundamental or original aspect of the mind or moral consciousness (本心).<sup>2</sup> From this thesis, he draws two corollaries. The first is a particular conception of moral agency. For actions to have genuine moral value, he holds, they must spring directly from the affective or virtue mind. As he sees it, this means they must be produced by situational, preconceptual impulses—direct, intuitive responses to the particular situation—and cannot be guided by

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cognition or reasoning. Second, Táng thinks it misguided to seek to guide action by a general account of ethical norms or to give an explicit normative justification for one's actions. For such norms or justifications can never amount to more than a gesture in the direction of the moral sentiments that issue from the dispositional-affective mind, which are the actual source of and justification for morality.

Táng's position clearly requires more detailed explication before it can be evaluated fairly. But even this capsule summary already raises a series of questions. First, is Táng's account of the Mencian and Mohist conceptions of mind correct? Are the ethical doctrines of these texts in fact rooted in characteristic views of mind in the way he suggests? I will argue that Táng's account of the Mencian view is partly correct. Aspects of passages that focus on moral psychology are indeed explained fairly well by his account of the “dispositional-affective mind.” Yet in other parts of *Mèngzǐ*, one can find conceptions of mind that correspond more closely to what Táng calls the “knowing mind,” and so his interpretation of *Mèngzǐ* cannot be considered fully satisfactory. His account of Mohist thought, on the other hand, is unconvincing, even bizarre. A correct interpretation of the Mohist conception of mind indeed helps to explain many aspects of their doctrines, including their search for objective, impartial moral standards. But Táng's account gets the Mohists wrong, and in fact the Mohist conception of mind does not function as the basis for Mohist normative ethics, as

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<sup>1</sup> 〈原心上：孟子之性情心與墨家之知識心〉，〈中國哲學原論導論篇〉（台北：學生，1986），頁 90–119。 All page references are to this essay.

<sup>2</sup> His actual claim is that it is the locus of our “fundamental heart-mind”（「吾人之本心所在」）(94).

he contends.

A further question is whether the distinction Táng draws between the “dispositional-affective” or “virtue” aspect of mind and the “knowing” or “reasoning” aspect is defensible, either as an interpretation of early Chinese thought or as a theory in the philosophy of psychology. I will suggest that Táng’s view probably fails as an interpretation of Chinese thought, because it imports an alien reason/intuition or reason/passion dichotomy into pre-Qín 先秦 philosophy.

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As many interpreters have argued, the pre-Qín conception of *xīn* 心 (heart-mind) combines cognitive and affective functions, its job being to evaluate both cognitive and affective reactions to stimuli and to respond to them by controlling action. The proper view of mind, I suggest, is one that integrates these two aspects, and I think only such an integrated view makes sense of the *Mèngzǐ* and *Mòzǐ*. Many parts of *Mèngzǐ* allude to the need to guide our moral dispositions by education, knowledge, and reasoning, and the moral fervor that infuses *Mòzǐ* is hardly intelligible without attributing to moral sentiments some basic role in the Mohist ethical outlook.

In what follows, I will argue that Táng’s interpretation of the two conceptions of mind is partly correct, but deeply flawed. I will go on to suggest that the compelling parts of his account can be merged to form a more unified view of mind that is largely shared by both the *Mèngzǐ* and the *Mòzǐ*. Indeed, I will suggest that the views on moral psychology presented in *Mèngzǐ* and *Mòzǐ* tend to be consistent and mutually complementary. Although contemporary interpreters sympathetic to Mencius tend not to acknowledge this point, the substantive moral views of the two texts are also very similar. They clash on a handful of familiar but minor issues, such as what funeral practices to adopt and how to characterize the proper moral attitude toward those with whom we have no kinship or personal relations.<sup>3</sup> But these are relatively insignificant differences. As far as their basic moral psychology and normative principles go, *Mèngzǐ* and the Mohists share a great deal.

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## 2. *Mèngzǐ*

Táng characterizes what he calls the “dispositional-affective mind or virtue mind” (性情心或德性心) as follows:

[It is] a heart-mind that comprises the affects of compassion, shame, courtesy, and approval/disapproval and is the root of the virtues of kindness, dutifulness, propriety, and wisdom....It is the source of people’s virtuous conduct or virtue, and so I name it the “virtue-mind.” ...It is a heart-mind that possesses moral value and is capable of self-awareness of this value, and is not merely a pure reasoning heart-mind or pure knowing heart-mind that seeks to know facts but is incapable of self-awareness of its

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<sup>3</sup> I have in mind here the question of whether the appropriate norm should be characterized as “inclusively being concerned for each other and in interaction benefiting each other” (兼相愛交相利) or as “treat our own elderly kin as they should be treated and through that practice extend this treatment to others’ elderly kin” (老吾老以及人之老). The practical import of the two characterizations is unlikely to differ significantly.

own moral value.<sup>4</sup>

This characterization raises several issues. The first stems from a potential ambiguity in Táng's terms 'root' and 'source', which could refer either to motivation or to justification. We can grant, for the sake of discussion, that all humans have a disposition to experience affective states, that these states may be intertwined with the virtues, and that they generally play an important role in moral motivation. But these psychological claims are distinct from, and do not justify, the normative claims that our affects are reliably appropriate or that the actions they motivate are morally right. Táng's characterization does not distinguish clearly between the motivational role of affective or moral attitudes and responses and the normative status of these attitudes and responses. The affective dispositions he alludes to could be present without reliably producing normatively correct action, or they could be reliable only in simple situations, as when we see a

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child about to fall into a well, but not in other, more complex situations, as when our legitimate interests conflict with others'.

A further point concerns the relation between the two conceptions or aspects of mind. Táng draws a sharp contrast between them, emphasizing that the dispositional-affective heart-mind is not a "purely reasoning" mind unaware of moral value. Yet surely the two are interdependent, rather than sharply distinct. On the one hand, the affective side cannot operate without cognition and reasoning, be it moral or instrumental. Affective states themselves are typically experienced as conceptualized and standing in conceptual and rational relations to other states. Nor, when it comes to action—Táng's concern—is there such a thing as a "purely reasoning" mind, independent of affective responses and unaware of value. (And surely it is a mistake to suggest that this is an accurate description of the Mohist conception of mind, if that is what Táng implies.) Moreover, the self-awareness of value that Táng attributes to the dispositional-affective mind is a form of conceptual awareness, specifically the capacity to deem things *shì* 是 (right) or *fēi* 非 (wrong). As such, it is grounded in the capacities of the "knowing mind," and so again the two aspects of mind are intertwined.<sup>5</sup>

Táng's justification for attributing this conception of mind to Mencius is also problematic. His claim is that the Mencian doctrine that the innate dispositions are morally good—*xìng shàn* 性善—is based on the dispositional-affective or "virtue" conception of mind.

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He suggests that Mencius establishes the existence of this mind by appeal to its immediate

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<sup>4</sup>性情心或德性心「乃一涵惻隱，羞惡，辭讓，是非之情，而為仁義禮智之德性所根之心，……亦即為人之德行或德性之原，故可名為德性心……其為具道德價值，而能自覺之之心，而非只是一求認識事實，而不自覺其具道德價值之純理智心、純知識心也。」(95)

<sup>5</sup> Táng himself acknowledges and develops this point in a later essay reprinted in the same volume, though he continues to bifurcate the cognitive and affective functions of the mind in the general way that I will be criticizing in this paper. See 〈原致知格物下：大學章句辨證及格物致知思想之發展〉，《中國哲學原論導論篇》(台北：學生，1986). The relevant discussion is at pages 360–67. The view Táng develops in this article is nuanced and deserves further discussion, but a detailed treatment is beyond the scope of this essay. (I thank Professor Chung-ying Cheng for drawing my attention to Táng's article.)

affective responses to other people or things (96). He cites five passages from the *Mèngzǐ* that he claims illustrate such direct responses, thereby proving that people's innate dispositions (*xìng* 性) are good (97).

Before reviewing the passages, let me try to clarify the consequences of Táng's claims here. First, what does the thesis that *xìng* 性 is good entail? On this interpretive point, I will defer to Dan Robins's detailed recent study of the concept of *xìng* 性, which explains that, in the context of action, *xìng* refers to dispositions to activity that are reliable, spontaneous, and effortless.<sup>6</sup> The thesis that people's *xìng* is good is thus the claim that people are reliably disposed to act spontaneously and effortlessly in a morally good way. So Táng's interpretive claim is that the passages support his account of the Mencian conception of the mind by depicting agents acting on the basis of their dispositional-affective heart-mind in such a way that they reliably, spontaneously, and effortlessly do what is good.

Let me review the five passages Táng cites one by one, examining to what extent they indeed support this claim. The passages are the following.

1. Section 2A:6, the paragraph about feeling alarm and compassion at the prospect of a child falling into a well. This passage depicts an affective response to a situation, but it does not show the agent actually *acting* on the response. So the passage does not really support the claim that *xìng* 性 is good. Rather, its point seems to be that everyone has innate affective dispositions sufficient to make them *capable* (*néng* 能) of being good—they have the “starting points” (*duān* 端)

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of virtue, which must be expanded and filled out to qualify as actual virtues. The passage explicitly recognizes that this process of development is not guaranteed to succeed for everyone. Moreover, it seems neutral as to whether the primary or central conception of mind at work is a “virtue mind” or “knowing mind.” The text itself does not suggest that it is the agent's affective response alone that drives action. Conceptual recognition of the object of compassion and of how to develop one's virtuous inclinations could play a role.

2. Section 6A:10, about a passerby or beggar refusing food that is presented with contempt. This passage too seems neutral with respect to Táng's interpretive claims. It does assert the existence of a “fundamental heart-mind” (*běn xīn* 本心) that is committed to morality, but again the claim seems to concern capabilities, not *xìng* (spontaneous, reliable dispositions), since it recognizes that many people “lose” this “fundamental heart-mind.” Nor does the passage depict this heart-mind as primarily affective rather than cognitive in nature. It merely asserts that those who maintain the “fundamental heart-mind” are committed to propriety and morality.
3. Section 3A:5, about the origin of funeral rituals in people's immediate, unbearable affective response to seeing their unburied parents eaten by animals and insects. Here we indeed have an illustration of action motivated by what is probably an immediate, affective response. However, the passage is not really about morality or moral action; it seems rather to be about the reform of customs, or perhaps moral

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<sup>6</sup> See Dan Robins, *The Debate over Human Nature in Warring States China*, University of Hong Kong Ph.D. dissertation, 2001.

standards. It implies that such reforms should be grounded in immediate affective responses. But it is silent on the issues of how we acquire our initial moral standards and how we guide action in routine contexts.

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4. Section 7A:16, about how Shùn 舜, while living in the mountains, was originally no different from the uncultured mountain people, but when he heard a single good saying or witnessed a single good action, his moral development was unstoppable, like the waters of an unleashed river. In my view, this passage in fact clashes with Táng's claim about the goodness of our innate dispositions, since it depicts Shùn as needing to learn about morality before he could develop virtue. The passage does not illustrate an immediate affective response to a moral situation. It is at best neutral as to the primacy of the dispositional-affective mind in Mencian psychology, and it might even be cited as a counterexample.
5. Section 1A:7, about how, by saving an ox from sacrifice, King Xuān of Qí 齊宣王 demonstrated the capacity to protect his people and become a good king. This passage seems to clash severely with Táng's interpretation. The King is indeed depicted as acting on an immediate affective response in saving the ox. But by the norms accepted in the text, this action was morally *wrong*. The King should have resisted his compassionate impulses, just as a gentleman keeps his compassion in check by staying away from a kitchen where animals are slaughtered. Moreover, the text depicts Mencius using practical reasoning to teach the King how to deliberately redirect his affective motivation from cases such as the ox to the care of his subjects. Far from supporting Táng's claim about the role of the dispositional-affective heart in Mencian thought, this passage suggests that Mencian moral psychology draws on both cognitive and affective functions in explaining moral action.

To sum up, the passages Táng cites do not depict agents acting on the basis of immediate affective responses in such a way that they

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reliably and spontaneously do what is good. Some of them do depict agents acting on affective responses, but where these are linked to morality, the claim is that we all have the *potential* or *capacity* to be virtuous, not that we inherently *are* virtuous. The passages do not imply that action issuing from immediate affective responses is reliably morally right. They thus do not support the thesis that *xìng* is good, nor do they support the interpretive claim that the *Mèngzǐ* endorses this thesis.<sup>7</sup> The texts also do not support Táng's interpretive claim that for Mencius the dispositional-affective mind is more fundamental or central to morality than cognition and reasoning. Several passages, such as 1A:7, seem better explained by the interpretation that in Mencian moral psychology the two aspects of mind normally work

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<sup>7</sup> In fact, the thesis is endorsed explicitly only twice in the *Mèngzǐ*, in sections 3A:1, which provides no detail about the thesis, and 6A:2, which claims that “The goodness of people's *xìng* is like the tendency of water to run downward; no people are not good, no water does not run downward” 人性之善也，猶水之就下也；人無有不善，水無有不下。 The use of *xìng* in this passage coheres well with our interpretation of it as entailing reliability, spontaneity, and effortlessness. The one other passage on the goodness of *xìng*, 6A:6, changes position from 6A:2, reinterpreting “goodness” as a *capacity* to be good, rather actual goodness: “As to their affects, they can be good, this is what I'm calling ‘good.’ If they are not good, it's not the fault of their capacities” (乃若其情，則可以為善矣，乃所謂善也。若夫為不善，非才之罪也。)

together, each playing an indispensable role.

On Táng's interpretation, the Mencian process of moral cultivation, or *gōngfū* 工夫, is a simple one. There is no need for reflective examination or control of our desires or other motivations (99). Rather, since moral action rests on an immediate reaction of the dispositional-affective heart-mind (102), we need only allow our dispositions to compassion, shame, courtesy, and approval to develop and be immediately carried through (99).

As an account of Mencian moral psychology, this is incomplete, though as an interpretation of the Mencian view of moral motivation, it is plausible. If the claim is that, according to the *Mèngzǐ*, people's

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dispositional-affective mind is sufficient to guide them to act morally, without guidance from cognition and reasoning, it is unconvincing. Relevant passages in the *Mèngzǐ* generally imply that to be moral, people need education and self-examination. This point is illustrated by Mencius's dialogue with King Xuān (1A:7),<sup>8</sup> by the role the same passage assigns to the king in educating his people, by the story of Shùn in the mountains (7A:16), and by the need to "concentrate" (*sī* 思) to become good.<sup>9</sup> These and other passages typically assume that we do recognize and guide behavior by explicit moral norms or models, as illustrated by the normative role of *lǐ* 禮 (propriety) in passages such as 1A:7 and 4A:1, of the role model set by the sages in 4A:2; by the duty to care for one's subjects in the story of King Xuān; and by the normative concept of "benevolent government" 仁政 in passages such as 2A:6 and 4A:1. These passages clash with the claim that for Mencius, the dispositional-affective mind naturally leads people to follow correct moral norms, with no need for education or self-conscious reflection aimed at guiding our actions. In any case, charity should direct us to avoid ascribing this view to the *Mèngzǐ*, if possible, since it is deeply implausible.

However, Táng's interpretation of the Mencian position becomes much more plausible if we distinguish between claims about moral knowledge or virtue—understood as a reliable disposition to act in the appropriate way—on the one hand, and moral motivation, on the other. If Táng's point is that Mencius sees people as generally inherently possessing ability and motivation sufficient to *become*

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moral, provided they are given virtuous models to emulate, then it is highly plausible. The main point of passages such as 1A:7, 2A:6, and 6A:6, for instance, is that everyone has the *ability* to be moral. If the interpretive point is that for Mencius, morality is in some sense "natural" or "easy" for people—and thus compatible with people's inherent dispositions, or *xìng* 性—then this too is a highly plausible reading, provided we understand it as referring to people's capacities, rather than how they instinctively and reliably tend to act. The text of the *Mèngzǐ* by and large does not confuse this claim about our psychological capacities with the claim that people have innate moral knowledge, that they instinctively, reliably act morally, or that they do not need education and critical reflection to develop their moral capacities. But Táng's contentions go beyond these plausible interpretive hypotheses. He holds that on

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<sup>8</sup> On my reading, for example, one emphasis of Mencius's conversation with King Xūn is to reassure him that he has the ability to be a true king, while teaching him how to direct this ability so as to achieve his goal. It is in this context that Mencius is depicted as saying, "Mobilize this heart and apply it to them" (舉斯心加諸彼而已).

<sup>9</sup> I have here in mind passages such as 6A:15: "The organ of the heart thinks/concentrates (思); if one concentrates, then one gets it, if not, one doesn't get it" (心之官則思，思則得之，不思則不得也).

the Mencian conception of mind, moral cultivation is merely a matter of letting our affective dispositions carry us, without any sort of conscious, cognitive direction or control. This interpretation is probably unjustified, since it has difficulty explaining the many *Mèngzǐ* passages that emphasize the need to direct the heart-mind's attention or to appeal to explicit normative standards in guiding action.

Overall, then, Táng's account of the Mencian conception of mind—or more accurately, of Mencian moral psychology—does not explain the relevant texts well. The texts collected in the *Mèngzǐ* do not emphasize a distinction between the affective and cognitive functions, and they discuss immediate affective responses mainly in the context of arguing that everyone has the *ability* to become virtuous, not that people already are reliably disposed to virtue. They do not contend that virtuous actions issue directly from the affects, without relying on cognitive functions. Nor do they assert that people's affective responses alone already provide them with sufficient resources to be virtuous, so that education or conscious cognitive

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direction of action is unneeded. Indeed, if we interpret the doctrine of *xìng shàn* 性善 as it would normally have been understood by a mainstream pre-Qín 先秦 audience,<sup>10</sup> then most passages in the *Mèngzǐ* do not endorse this doctrine. The only one that unambiguously does so is 6A:2, when it states that “The goodness of people's *xìng* is like the tendency of water to run downward.” But this statement is immediately revised in 6A:6 to the claim that normal humans all have the *capacity* to become morally good, not that their inherent dispositional structure is *already* good.<sup>11</sup>

Táng's treatment of Mencian moral cultivation no doubt sheds light on the Mencian understanding of virtue and action. As his discussion rightly implies, the text endorses the idea that by focusing on our affective impulses, we will find that we have the capacity to easily develop reliable moral responses. But this capacity does not entail the doctrine that our inherent dispositions are good, nor does it rule out the need for moral education and cognitive activity. Táng neglects the role of education, practical reasoning, and conceptual, cognitive activity in Mencian thought. (In 1A:7, King Xuān saves the ox because to him it looks *like a human prisoner*; in 2A:6, bystanders feel alarm at the child in danger because they recognize it *as a child*.) He recognizes the Mencian view that normal people possess moral capacities sufficient to allow them to easily acquire virtue, but he seems to confuse this highly plausible view with the much stronger—and much less plausible—view that people's immediate affective responses in some sense render them inherently

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virtuous, and all they need to do is let these responses operate freely. Overall, his thesis that the “dispositional-affective or virtue mind” operates independently from the “knowing mind” and that Mencian thought centers on the former, not the latter, has difficulty explaining the very texts that he cites to support it. The sort of reason/intuition dichotomy he posits is just not found, even implicitly, in the *Mèngzǐ*.

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<sup>10</sup> This seems to be the way that Xúnzǐ 荀子 understood it, for example.

<sup>11</sup> These points about the Mencian doctrine of *xìng shàn* are indebted to many conversations with Dan Robins. As Robins has pointed out to me, part of the aim of the *xìng shàn* doctrine is probably to show that morality is compatible with *xìng* 性. That is, becoming virtuous does not damage our *xìng*, as some *Zhūangzǐ* 莊子 passages claim it does, and morality can be spontaneous, reliable, effortless, and healthy (cf. his dissertation, cited earlier).

### 3. *Mòzǐ*

Táng's discussion of the *Mòzǐ* is complex, provocative, and disputable on many points. His central contention is that Mohist thought is grounded in the second of the two conceptions of mind he identifies—the “knowing mind”—and that this view of mind explains both the central features and the major flaws of Mohist ethics. I will address three major points in the interpretation of Mohist thought where I believe Táng's appeal to the reason/intuition dichotomy has led him off course. These correspond to his three main criticisms of Mohism, which we can summarize as follows:

- (i) Táng suggests that on the Mohist conception of mind, action always involves an intermediate process of cognition, which prevents any immediate affective response to the particular situation. Since he holds that moral worth lies in the immediate responses of the dispositional-affective mind, he concludes that action as the Mohists understand it lacks moral worth.
- (ii) The Mohist ethical ideal of *jiān ài* 兼愛, or inclusive moral concern, is practically impossible and morally unattractive, among other reasons because it replaces our moral concern for others as particular individuals by an abstract concern with humanity in general.
- (iii) The Mohist attempt to justify their normative ethics fails,

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because the “reasoning mind” cannot provide moral justification.

Before evaluating these criticisms, let me review Táng's characterization of the “knowing mind” or “reasoning mind” that he claims provides the conceptual basis for Mohist thought.

Táng correctly points out that the *Mòzǐ* frequently focuses attention on knowledge, not moral sentiments or immediate responses, as do the parts of *Mèngzǐ* he discusses.<sup>12</sup> This focus is easily explicable, of course. The Mohists are concerned with knowledge because their theoretical focus is normative theory, not moral psychology. They assume that most people are already committed to morality. As they see it, the central issue of moral philosophy is not motivating people or triggering their existing motivations, but finding and applying the correct moral norms. What society needs, they think, is a general, objectively justified, easily applied normative theory to direct people's existing moral motivation in the right direction by enabling them to correctly distinguish *shì* (right) from *fēi* (wrong).<sup>13</sup>

Táng explains this focus on knowledge differently. He proposes that Mohist thought

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<sup>12</sup> He exaggerates, however, in attempting to interpret *all* instances of *xīn* 心 in *Mòzǐ* as related to knowledge, not sentiment (108). For example, the “Conforming Upward (II)” 尚同中 essay describes members of troubled families as having a “heart-mind to break up” 離散之心 their family. This and other uses of *xīn* 心 (heart-mind) probably refer to affective attitudes, not cognitive judgments.

<sup>13</sup> For instance, the “Conforming Upward” 尚同 essays depict people's commitment their own moral views and disapproval of other views as being so strong as to lead to violence and the breakup of families. Moral motivation is also alluded to in the conclusion of several Mohist essays, which wrap up by claiming that “Kings, dukes, ministers, officials, and gentlemen” who “within, genuinely desire to be kind and moral,” should examine and apply Mohist normative doctrines.



grows out of a conception of a “knowing mind” or “reasoning mind,” which “contacts things and understands, considers, and distinguishes them, thus recognizing to what kinds they belong, in order further to recognize the [relevant] kinds of our

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knowledge and action.”<sup>14</sup> It “first recognizes external things, then distinguishes the kinds to which they belong and recognizes their patterns, and then on the basis of these patterns draws inferences from the known to the unknown.”<sup>15</sup>

This characterization is unobjectionable, and Táng insightfully emphasizes how, for the Mohists, the discriminating function of the mind directs action. In his detailed explication of the function of the knowing mind, however, Táng imports a conceptualist or representationalist model of cognition that is familiar from Descartes and Locke, but unlike anything in the Mohist texts. His account of the Mohist view of perception is this:

[The mind] captures the appearances of things and forms what in contemporary terms are called mental impressions. Then, on the basis of the mental impressions, it judges things, thus being able to divide them into kinds and form what in contemporary terms are called concepts of various things. The activity of the human mind in this process fundamentally is one of capturing the appearance of external things to form a mental impression, which is internal to the mind.<sup>16</sup>

These inner impressions or ideas can be expressed outwardly in language. But fundamentally, the objects of cognition are inner, mental objects: “what people know is purely private” (108).

On this model of mind, according to Táng, cognition involves a form of response to the environment, but this response is indirect.

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The mind responds to what is sensed by forming a private mental representation, which then in turn functions as the object of knowledge. Action is thus guided via a sort of mental intermediary. By contrast, according to Táng, on the Mencian model, the dispositional-affective mind responds directly to objects or events in the world, such as an infant crawling toward a well.

In this interpretation of the Mohist theory of perception, Táng, usually a discerning reader of ancient Chinese texts, seems to have been misled by bad Western philosophy, perhaps British empiricism or the sense-data theories popular in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. By the time of this essay, in 1955, thinkers such as Wittgenstein, Austin, Sellars, and Quine had convinced most Anglo-American philosophers that the conceptualist or representationalist view of mind Táng attributes to the Mohists here is deeply mistaken. Perception no doubt involves processes in which states of the nervous system represent the environment in some way. But the object of the agent’s awareness in perception is not an internal state or entity; it is the perceived object in the environment. Moreover, there is no reason to think that the Mohists ever held the sort of conceptualist view Táng ascribes to

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<sup>14</sup> 「接於物而明之、慮之、辨之，而知其類，以進而知吾人之知識與行為之類。」(106)

<sup>15</sup> 「首在認知外物，次則辨其類，知其理，而據理以由已知推未知。」(106)

<sup>16</sup> 「認取物之相貌，而形成今所謂之印象觀念，再本印象觀念以判斷物，則能劃分物之類，並能形成今所謂各類物之概念。此中人心之活動，在根本上為對外物之相貌，有所攝取，以成印象觀念等。而此印象觀念等，則為內在於心者。」(108)

them. His interpretation rests mainly on his account of the concept of *mào* 貌 in later Mohist epistemology. The *Mò Biàn* 墨辯 tells us that “knowing” is “using the knowing to pass by things and being able to *mào* 貌 (describe) them. Like seeing.”<sup>17</sup> Táng interprets this instance of *mào* as “obtaining a mental impression” (106). But in later Mohist thought, *mào* typically refers to the surface features of objects (it is typically paired with *xíng* 形, which refers to their shape or form). Nothing in the text here or elsewhere seems plausibly explained by taking *mào* to refer to a process of forming an abstract mental object. Rather, the most likely interpretation is either

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roughly “to describe” or “to recognize the look of.” Moreover, the statement about *mào* Táng cites is an explanation of Canon A5, which tells us that knowing is “contacting” (接) things. The “contact” is probably direct, since no role is mentioned for any mental intermediary. Indeed, it is unlikely that any pre-Qín text concerned with perceptual knowledge—primarily texts collected in the *Mòzǐ* and *Xúnzǐ*—can convincingly be explained by the sort of conceptualist view of mind Táng attributes to the Mohists. For example, in the perceptual theory of the *Xúnzǐ* (in Book 22, *Zhèngmíng* 正名), the heart-mind uses the sense organs to differentiate features of objects and thus recognize them.<sup>18</sup> No mental intermediaries are mentioned.

In fact, the Mohist conception of knowledge emphasizes just the feature of the dispositional-affective conception of mind that Táng holds so important: direct, practical responses to the situation. The Mohists regard knowledge as a reliable, practical ability to correctly distinguish things, such as the referents of the terms used to express a claim. This conception is illustrated in *Mòzǐ* passages such as the one about the blind man who qualifies as “knowing black and white” only if he can pick them out in practice (Book 47).<sup>19</sup> Someone whose responses are not yet immediate and reliable is considered to not yet genuinely or fully know something. Analogously, for Táng, actions that are not yet immediate, reliable, appropriate responses to the situation lack virtue, and hence moral worth.

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A point that emerges from this similarity between the Mohist conception of knowledge and the notion of virtue is that cognitive activity and immediate, intuitive or affective responses are not contrasting types of processes, as Táng’s dichotomy between the two conceptions of mind suggests. Rather, as I suggested in section 2, they are complementary and to some extent interdependent. On the one hand, many cognitive states, such as most instances of veridical perceptual knowledge, are themselves just immediate responses to particular situations. Other types of cognitive activity rest on immediate responses.<sup>20</sup> For

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<sup>17</sup> 「知也者，以其知過物而能貌之。若見。」(Canon A5.)

<sup>18</sup> I am referring to passages such as “Forms, surfaces, and patterns are differentiated using the eye...the heart has cognitive awareness. The cognitive awareness is able to recognize sounds by means of the ear, forms by means of the eye...” (形體、色理以目異...心有徵知。徵知，則緣耳而知聲可也，緣目而知形可也...)。李滌生，*荀子集釋* (台北：學生，1979)，頁 513。

<sup>19</sup> The Mohists hold that a blind man does not qualify as “knowing white and black,” because he cannot distinguish the two in practice. For a discussion of this passage, see my article on Mohism in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/mohism/#epistemology>).

<sup>20</sup> John Searle articulates the role of the capacity for such immediate responses through his notion of the “Background” to intentionality. Without the Background, there can be no intentionality. But conversely, without intentionality, there is no Background either. For a detailed discussion of the Background and its relation to action, see my “*Wu-Wei*, the Background, and Intentionality,” forthcoming in Bo Mou, ed., *Searle’s Philosophy*

instance, one criterion for judging whether an agent grasps a concept is whether she can use it properly in practice. Her ability to do so is in effect a disposition to respond immediately to particular situations by saying and acting in certain ways. Conversely, that some action or psychological state is an immediate, affective response does not mean that it is not also cognitive or that it is independent of cognitive activity. Most immediate responses either result from cognition or have a cognitive component. In the prototypical case of feeling alarm about a child in danger of falling into a well, for instance, the agent's alarm response is aroused by the cognitive state of recognizing the child *as an infant human who is in danger*. In most cases, the attitude of alarm is probably an intentional state—alarm *about* something—and the intentional content of this state will be fixed by cognitive processes. If the alarm is accompanied by action to save the child, then the response includes an intention to act, which again will have a content fixed by cognition. To suppose

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that such immediate responses are independent of cognition or rationality is probably a sign of mistakenly taking conscious thought or reflection to be the mark of cognitive activity, when instead the distinguishing feature of such activity is probably the role such responses play within a network of intentional states and actions.

These reflections suggest that Táng's dichotomy between the "dispositional-affective" and "knowing" aspects or conceptions of mind is problematic. Rather than contrasting with cognitive capacities, Táng's paradigm cases of virtuous action springing from affective dispositions are likely to depend on such capacities, especially if these cases are thought of as manifestations of reliable responsive dispositions. Affective and cognitive responses are not, and cannot, be divorced in the way that Táng suggests.

With this groundwork in hand, we can now consider Táng's major criticisms of Mohist ethics, which he sees as growing out of what he takes to be the Mohists' flawed or one-sided conception of mind.

### 3.1 Moral Worth

Táng's first criticism is based on his account of moral worth. To be morally worthy, he holds, an action must be an immediate, non-conceptual response of the affective dispositions to a particular situation.<sup>21</sup> As he understands it, the knowing mind cannot produce such immediate responses. So any ethics that appeals to the knowing mind to guide action, as Mohist ethics clearly does in at least some cases, thereby prevents agents from performing actions of genuine

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moral value. Moreover, if Táng is correct, then Mohist ethics is unable to explain moral worth.

Táng's view of moral worth as growing out of a certain kind of immediate response to

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*and Chinese Philosophy: Constructive Engagement*. For Searle's account of the Background, see his *The Construction of Social Reality* (The Free Press, 1995).

<sup>21</sup> Táng explains (109) that genuine compassion (真惻隱心) is an immediate sensing and response to the situation (直感直應) in which recognition, affects, and intention merge as one (知情意是三位一體). It unifies the agent's mind and action, connecting them directly with the situation to which she is responding. He refers to this as "the highest standard" (最高的標準) of moral action.

the situation does reflect a distinctive feature of pre-Qín philosophy of action. Early Chinese thinkers shared a “performance” model of mind and action. One aspect of this model is the Mohist conception of knowledge, mentioned above. To count as “knowing” something, for the Mohists, an agent must manifest a certain sort of reliability in performance—she must be able to reliably distinguish and name things correctly. In the context of this model, virtue is analogous to a sort of moral “skill” or “virtuosity.”<sup>22</sup> It is a disposition to reliably respond immediately and appropriately to the particular situation, much as the skilled player of a sport responds instantaneously to changing situations within a game. So in this respect Táng’s account captures an important feature of a widely shared ancient Chinese view of virtue.

But Táng’s representationalist, intellectualist model of the knowing mind leads him to claim that cognition involves an intermediate step between perception and action, in which a private mental “impression” or “idea” is formed and pondered by an inner subject. As he sees it, this intermediate step means that any response to the particular situation will be indirect. Employing the knowing mind in guiding action makes it impossible in principle for the agent’s responses ever to reach the level of immediacy, unity, and thus virtuosity available from the dispositional-affective mind.

As I’ve discussed, there is no reason to think that cognition contrasts or interferes with the immediacy of the agent’s response.

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Táng believes it does only because of his implausible conceptualist account of cognition. For the moral beginner, or in unusual, difficult situations, cognition and reasoning may entail an indirect, delayed response while the agent consciously deliberates about what action to take. But that need not be typical. Immediate responses can involve cognitive activity, as well as non-intentional background capacities, and acts such as a lunge to save a infant from falling into a well will generally involve cognitive capacities. There is no reason to think that actions that issue from or are triggered by the knowing mind cannot reach the level of immediate response Táng describes. Moreover, we can argue that to be morally right or good, a response *must* be rationally related to a network of values, beliefs, desires, and other intentional states that justify and explain its moral status. Otherwise, there is nothing to distinguish a virtuous immediate response from a mere urge to perform some non-moral action, such as join in a basketball game, sing a song, or scratch one’s head. An agent who merely acts on impulse, with no grasp of the reasons for her actions, is hardly a paradigm of virtue. To have moral value, then, actions must be grounded partly in what Táng calls the “knowing mind” or “reasoning mind.” They must stand in normative, rational relations to intentional states and principles that justify them, and the agent must grasp these relations to some extent, even if only implicitly. Of course, morally worthy actions need not be preceded by conscious moral reasoning. The virtuous agent will often “just act.” But because the agent is an *agent*—a creature with intentionality—her actions bear rational relations to principles and commitments that determine their moral status. If an action has moral worth, the agent should at least have the *capacity* to explicitly deem it *shì* 是 (right) or *fēi* 非 (wrong) correctly by appropriate norms.

On this point, Táng seems to disagree. He holds that there is a fundamental difference in the significance of the *shì-fēi* (this/right

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<sup>22</sup> Chad Hansen seems to have been the first to use the term ‘virtuosity’ as a gloss for the pre-Qín conception of *dé* 德, typically translated as ‘virtue.’ See *A Daoist Theory of Chinese Thought* (Oxford, 1992). Since then this interpretation has become quite common, shared by many interpreters.

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vs. not/wrong) distinction as employed in *Mèngzǐ* and *Mòzǐ*. For *Mèngzǐ*, he contends, *shì-fēi* are purely affective; for the Mohists, they are cognitive.<sup>23</sup> For brevity, I will not discuss this point in detail, but will only sketch three reasons why I think it implausible. First, I have already argued that Táng’s case for attributing a distinctive “dispositional-affective” conception of mind to the *Mèngzǐ* is unconvincing. Second, it would be difficult to justify the claim that these terms have a fundamentally different meaning in the two texts. They are among the most commonly used words in the classical Chinese language and seem best explained as part of the shared conceptual framework of ancient Chinese thought. Moreover, the *Mèngzǐ* itself links *shì-fēi* to knowledge or wisdom.<sup>24</sup> Third, it seems likely that early Chinese thinkers as a whole did not draw a rigid dichotomy between affective and cognitive attitudes, and that the attitudes of *shì* and *fēi* were typically understood as combining the two. Indeed, in my view this intriguing aspect of early Chinese thought is probably correct. A strong argument can be made that affective responses and recognition cannot intelligibly be distinguished in the way Táng’s dichotomy requires. To have an affective response to *x*, we must recognize that it is *x*; but part of recognizing that it is *x*

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typically is having a certain sort of response to it.<sup>25</sup>

### 3.2 Inclusive Concern

Táng’s second criticism of Mohist thought is a direct attack on the Mohist ethical doctrine of *jiān ài* 兼愛, or “inclusive concern.” Táng’s conceptualist account of the reasoning mind leads him to conclude that “inclusive concern” follows directly from the Mohist conception of mind. Yet he argues that the way the doctrine is grounded in this conception of mind makes it both ethically unattractive and practically impossible.

Táng reconstructs the role of the reasoning mind in motivating the doctrine of inclusive concern as follows (114–15). On this conception of mind, he suggests, the direct objects of thought and sentiment are not particular things in the world, but abstract, general mental representations of kinds of things. Objects are thus known not as individuals, but as instances of kinds. Thus the primary objects of affective responses, such as concern, are kinds, not individuals. Hence, according to Táng, for the Mohists the primary object of an agent’s attitude of moral concern is not any particular human being, but the general kind ‘human’. So moral concern obviously must be all-inclusive (*jiān* 兼), since it is directed at humans *as a kind*. Given Táng’s account of the knowing mind, being concerned for a select group of people and not all would be contradictory (114).

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<sup>23</sup> Interestingly, Táng’s reason for claiming that *shì-fēi* attitudes in *Mèngzǐ* are purely affective is distinct from such metaethical views as emotivism or noncognitivism. He is not putting forward a metaethical thesis, such as that ethical judgments are fundamentally expressions of attitudes, rather than statements of facts. He is claiming, rather, that morally worthy actions must spring from non-conceptual responses. We can see here how features he identifies as crucial to morally worthy action might tend to promote confusion between psychological and normative issues. Táng’s claim is that apart from any normative justification of the content of the action, an action has greater moral worth when it springs from a certain type of psychological process. From this defensible view, it is a short, though by no means inevitable, step to the mistaken view that the mere presence of a psychological process of that type is sufficient to ensure the moral rightness or goodness of the action.

<sup>24</sup> For instance, when in 2A:6 the text claims that “the *shì-fēi* heart-mind is the beginning of knowledge/wisdom” (是非之心，智之端也).

<sup>25</sup> See James Griffin, *Value Judgment* (Oxford, 1996), p. 56.

Against the Mohist view as he articulates it, Táng objects that inclusive concern cannot be put into practice,<sup>26</sup> for two reasons. First, no one can actually be equally concerned about all people, present, past, and future, and no one can possibly benefit them all (115). Second, the Mohist view of mind cuts us off from the concrete

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individuals whom we are concerned about, asking us to feel concern for them specifically as members of kinds, rather than as individuals (115). Táng seems to think that we are simply emotionally incapable of doing this.

The Mohist ethical theory has its weak points, to be sure, but Táng's criticisms seem based on several misunderstandings. First, the Mohists do not hold that inclusive concern requires us to actually benefit everyone, as he thinks (114). Their norm is "inclusively be concerned for each other and in interaction benefit each other" (兼相愛, 交相利). That is, our morally concerned attitude must cover everyone, but we need to benefit only those with whom we actually interact.<sup>27</sup> So the fact that we as individuals may be unable to benefit everyone does not entail that inclusive concern as the Mohists understand it is practically impossible.

Nor is it true that the Mohist ethical theory treats persons only as instances of an abstract notion of humanity, and not as particular individuals—or if it does so, it is on the same footing as Ruist 儒家 ethics in this regard. The Mohist normative theory incorporates the same social relations—such as sovereign/subject and father/son—as Ruist ethics and the same role-related virtues, such as benevolence, loyalty, kindness, filiality, and brotherliness (惠忠慈孝悌). According to the later Mohist doctrine of "graded concern" (倫列之愛) presented in the *Dà Qǔ* 大取, we are to give preferential treatment to individuals with whom we have special, particular relationships. Though neither Mohist nor Ruist texts are explicit about this, presumably to be a genuinely kind father, filial son, and so forth, a person must treat those around him as concrete individuals, with particular interests

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and needs, and not merely as nonspecific instances of kinds or as values of variables. Otherwise, it is difficult to see how one could realize the virtues of being kind, loyal, and filial.

A further misunderstanding concerns Táng's account of the motivation for the Mohist ethical theory. The Mohists do not justify inclusive concern by drawing inferences from their conception of mind, nor from their conception of the object of moral concern, be it particular individuals or the entire kind 'human'. Inclusive concern is grounded on arguments about impartially justified reasons or norms for action. The Mohists justify it in two ways: on utilitarian grounds, by appeal to the impartially justified norm of promoting the welfare of all, and on the grounds that it is the norm of conduct exemplified by the noblest moral role model, *tiān* 天 (heaven).

A key point to notice in Táng's discussion is that he attributes the alleged defects of the Mohist ethical theory to the very operation of the knowing and reasoning mind. That is, he

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<sup>26</sup> Or at least not by any agent with finite capacities. *Tiān* 天 (heaven) can practice it.

<sup>27</sup> This point is explicit in texts such as Canon and Explanation A8, which says that we must take "all under heaven" as our "portion," which we will seek to benefit when possible. But it is not necessary for our capability to benefit others to be used, if circumstances do not permit us to do so. Having a morally good attitude is enough, if circumstances prevent us from actually benefiting others.

attributes the shortcomings of Mohist ethics not to a mistaken grasp of moral values and norms or to errors in reasoning, but to the futility of cognition and reasoning in themselves. Indeed, as Táng sees things, apparently any attempt to perform a morally good act for a reason will necessarily fail to have moral worth, because his belief that the operations of the “reasoning mind” by their very nature prevent actions from having moral worth. He thus takes his criticisms of Mohism to provide an argument for placing ethics wholly on the intuition side of the reason/intuition dichotomy. In his third criticism of the Mohists, Táng goes even further, arguing that the very aim of normative theory—a reasoned account of the justification for our ethical judgments and actions—is in principle beyond reach.

### 3.3 Justifying Moral Norms

Táng’s third major criticism is that the Mohists’ attempt to justify

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their ethics fails. He contrasts this with the Mencian conception of the virtues, for which, he says, the correct approach is to attempt no justification at all. A strength of the Mencian approach, he contends, is that it recognizes that the morally “kind heart” (*rén xīn* 仁心) requires no justification.

Táng rehearses several of the Mohists’ justifications for the doctrine of inclusive concern (112-13). The Mohists appeal to goods such as social order (*zhì* 治) and human welfare (*lì* 利) and argue that we should seek to emulate moral exemplars, whose conduct is reliably good and right. For them, the highest such exemplar is of course *tiān* 天 (heaven). But, Táng contends, each of the Mohists’ lines of justification turns inclusive concern into merely a means to an end.<sup>28</sup> The moral doctrine thus becomes merely a product of the instrumental rationality of the knowing or reasoning mind. As a consequence, Táng thinks, no genuine moral justification for it is available. For, he says (113), one could always question why we should seek social order and welfare or why we should emulate Heaven. If the answer is that doing so benefits us, then our justification is not moral after all, but prudential (113). If the answer is that inclusive care is good, or seeking these things is right, then we have a circular argument (113).<sup>29</sup>

Táng himself holds that the desire for social order and human welfare rests on the heart-mind’s “inability to bear suffering” (不忍之心)—a Mencian notion that I will here gloss as a form of sympathy. His view is that this sentiment can be given no justification and

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requires none. Indeed, to ask for a justification is to “fall into the reasoning mind” and “leave this mind” (113). This mysterious statement seems to rest on another claim Táng makes about the justification for compassion, kindness, and other virtues (112). He holds that no reasons for these are needed, because the morally good heart-mind (*rén xīn* 仁心) enjoys an “existence that transcends reason, indeed transcends all knowledge. [The reason] that it

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<sup>28</sup> One can argue that for the Mohists, the relationship between *ai* 愛 (concern) and *lì* 利 (benefit) is conceptually tighter than merely means-ends. Concern (*ai* 愛) seems to be the psychological attitude that leads one to reliably benefit others, while the practice of benefiting others is sufficient evidence that one has concern. The two may thus have been regarded as two sides of the same coin.

<sup>29</sup> An answer that Táng should have considered but does not is that these are basic goods that are constitutive of or preconditions for human welfare (and because heaven is a perfectly wise and reliable moral exemplar). This in fact seems to be the Mohists’ answer to the question, so it is puzzling why Táng does not consider it.

should exist lies in the virtue-heart's delight and ease in itself."<sup>30</sup> Táng thus in effect contends that moral worth lies in immediate responses motivated by affective dispositions that are morally good because they yield feelings of delight and ease. This view is dangerously easy to caricature. An unsympathetic reader could suggest it amounts to claiming that whatever makes one happy is thereby morally worthy. A more charitable reading, I think, is that Táng is in effect contending that the possession and exercise of the virtues is part of human flourishing. His reference to "delight and ease in itself" can plausibly be taken as expressing the view that the exercise of virtuous dispositions is a realization of human well-being.

If I understand him correctly, then, Táng wants to claim—roughly, and in my words, not his—that the fundamental justification for Mohist, or any other, morality, insofar as it is correct, lies in the brute phenomenon of moral concern or commitment, as exemplified by Mencian sympathy. This concern or commitment calls for no rational justification, but in a sense provides its own, intrinsic justification, since it is partly constitutive of human flourishing or well-being.

We can grant that people typically feel sympathy or concern for others' suffering and that this concern may provide an important,

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even essential basis for moral motivation and for our capacity to recognize moral value. Some form of such concern could also count among the intrinsic goods posited by a defensible moral theory. The concern thus might not need to be justified by appeal to other goods or to moral principles, insofar as its moral value is intrinsic, not resting on anything more fundamental. But this by no means entails that there is no justificatory work to be done here, nor any role for the "reasoning mind." We can still ask for an explanation of why and how this concern or sympathy has the status of being intrinsically morally valuable. For obviously not all sympathy is valuable, nor is all action issuing from sympathy thereby automatically morally correct. Sympathy toward bacteria or blades of grass probably has no value; randomly murdering members of a dominant ethnic group out of sympathy for those they oppress would be pernicious. A serious shortcoming of Táng's discussion is that he sidesteps normative issues such as how to specify the content of morally good sympathy. He thus frames his discussion so as to overlook the strengths of Mohist thought. For normative issues are what primarily concerned the Mohists, and these are issues that require bringing the capacities of the "reasoning mind" into play.

Does addressing normative issues just lead us back in a circle to the spontaneous affective responses of the "virtue mind," without doing any work besides underscoring whatever justification is intrinsic to these responses? In implying that appealing to such intrinsic goods makes justification "circular," Táng seems to misunderstand the point of the Mohist normative theory. The aim is not the impossible one of finding some "deeper" justification for what are already basic goods or principles. It is to give a clear, systematic explanation of moral values and norms, which can then be applied to justify beliefs, actions, practices, and institutions. Arguably, such a theory enhances the justification even of the most basic goods or principles, by subjecting

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them to critical reflection and clarifying their status. Also, by giving agents a clearer, more

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<sup>30</sup> 「其有，為超理智之上之有，亦為超一切知識上之理由者。其當有，在此德性心自悅自安……。」 (112).



systematic understanding of the right and the good, the theory may enhance the reliability with which their beliefs and actions track them, even in cases in which agents do not stop to explicitly justify what they think or do. Since part of virtue is a reliable disposition to act morally, such a theory thus has the potential to aid in the cultivation of virtue. Obviously, the mere intellectual ability to apply a theory to justify actions is not sufficient for virtue. Moral know-how, moral perception, and virtuous dispositions are all essential. But surely virtue can be enhanced by strengthening our knowledge of moral norms and values and our capacity for moral reasoning.

Affective dispositions such as sympathy and their role in our well-being may provide part of the explanation for why we should be moral and what the fundamental moral values are. But they are unlikely to be the whole story. Our capacity for and commitment to rationality and justification may also play an essential role. The appropriate exercise of moral reasoning may be among the prerequisites for the state of moral delight and ease that Táng describes. For just as we often experience immediate affective responses to particular situations, we also often find ourselves with a deep desire or commitment to do what our “knowing mind” deems morally justified.<sup>31</sup> I suggest that this sort of desire is as paradigmatic a moral motivation as the “inability to bear others’ suffering” is. Clearly, the Mohists thought so, since it is among the basic psychological attitudes to which their ethics appeals.

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There need be no clash or tension between the Mencian emphasis on the role of affective dispositions in motivating morality and the Mohist project of identifying correct moral norms and guiding or justifying action by appeal to them. The notion that the two are rivals or alternatives arises only because of the rigid reason/intuition dichotomy with which Táng frames his discussion. In the mature moral agent, the affective dispositions and cognitive functions generally complement each other.<sup>32</sup> Seeking explicit, impartial justifications for our actions can be one expression of our moral concern for others. There is no reason to think that by justifying or reasoning about our actions, we thereby abandon the “virtue mind.” Rather, the reliable disposition to identify what is best justified and act accordingly is itself one aspect of virtue.

#### 4. Concluding Remarks

I conclude that the distinction Táng draws between the “knowing mind” or “reasoning mind” and the “dispositional-affective mind” or “virtue mind” is a false dichotomy. Neither aspect of mind is conceptually prior, and both are necessary for moral agency. Mohist and Mencian ethics alike apply both aspects of mind, though the two texts generally focus on different issues. The *Mòzi* tends to focus on normative theory, the *Mèngzǐ* on moral psychology, specifically the issue of actualizing our ability to become morally good. In themselves, these tendencies do not provide grounds for arguing either for or against the views presented in either text. The two simply happen to emphasize different issues.

The Mohist ethical theory is indeed flawed, but probably not

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<sup>31</sup> This point is part of the significance of the Mohist version of the state of nature argument for the existence of the state, as presented in the *Shàngtóng* 尚同 texts. A state is needed to unify moral norms, because in the absence of a unified morality people’s deep commitment to morality will lead to conflict between those following different moralities.

<sup>32</sup> Indeed, I think the two are inseparable, in that the operation of either inherently involves the operation of the other. But arguing for this point would take me beyond the scope of this paper.

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for the reasons Táng identifies. As I have argued elsewhere,<sup>33</sup> the main difficulty with the Mohist theory probably lies in its conception of impartiality, which it tends to locate at the level of moral concern and practice, rather than at the level of justification. A more defensible theory would explicitly incorporate impartiality, and thus justification, at the level of the *dào* 道 (way, norms) we follow, rather than capturing impartiality by the notion of emulating Heaven in our attitudes and actions.<sup>34</sup> Strictly speaking, emulating Heaven is practically impossible, as Táng correctly says, for we are not gods. A more compelling ethical theory would allow “partial” attitudes, such as greater concern for one’s family and friends, provided they comply with impartially justified norms. Táng himself captures this point well when he says of the Mohist doctrine of “graded concern” (倫列之愛) that “in this there seems to be partiality, yet it conforms to the impartiality of heaven’s pattern.”<sup>35</sup> These difficulties with the Mohist ethical theory are not due to the role of the knowing mind or reasoning mind, however. They are due to conceptual or inferential errors.

The persuasive parts of Táng’s account of Mencian moral psychology are largely compatible with the Mohist conception of mind. The two can be treated as complementary aspects of a plausible unified view of moral motivation, reasoning, and agency. This is to be expected, I think. For the reasoning mind too is part of what Táng calls the “original mind” (本心). We cannot paint a complete picture of moral agency without it.

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<sup>33</sup> On this point, see the section on “Critical Assessment” in my article on Mohism in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/mohism/#assessment2>).

<sup>34</sup> Interestingly, the problems with the Mohist theory here may be due to a failure to distinguish affective from cognitive functions, not an overemphasis on the cognitive at the expense of the affective.

<sup>35</sup> 「此中似有私，而合乎天理之公」 (114).