



Human Value in the Later Mohist Texts

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Abstract

Commentators have spoken of the Mohists as taking humans to be ends or valued for their own sake. This essay argues that the later Mohists grant such noninstrumental value a limited role. While benevolence and inclusive love do involve treating their recipients as ends, not all humans are recipients of benevolence and inclusive love. “The Lesser Choosing” and “The Greater Choosing” suggest that one is to hate inflictors of serious harm and to sometimes even suspend love of innocents for the greater benefit of the world. While being noninstrumentally loved and benefited follows from being shown benevolence and inclusive love, whatever noninstrumental value is involved does not by itself entitle one to be shown benevolence and inclusive love in the first place.

Keywords Benevolence · Care · Hate · Love · Mohist · Noninstrumental value

1 Introduction

The *Mozi* 墨子, written not by the eponymous philosopher but by his followers, represents a rival to the Confucian tradition during the latter’s early development, from the 5th to the 3rd centuries BCE. The early texts come in sets of three chapters or books (*pian* 篇) devoted to a theme, though extant texts sometimes feature incomplete triads (Defoort and Standaert 2013: 4–5; Fraser 2020a: xv–xvi). The middle period comes in the form of dialogues and a criticism of the Confucian tradition that takes on the triadic form of the early texts but the rhetorical style of the dialogues (Defoort and Standaert 2013: 5–6; Fraser 2013: 177–182; Fraser 2020a: xvi–xvii). The later texts include both a guide to defensive warfare and dialectical materials (Defoort and Standaert 2013: 3; Fraser 2020a: xvi–xviii), the latter of which will provide the bulk of this essay’s textual evidence. It is a matter of controversy as to how closely the later authors cohered among themselves and with the earlier

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authors. However, there is hardly evidence that a nontrivial number of Mohists from any period diverged from the following principles. First, what makes an action right (*yi* 義) is that it brings about benefit (*li* 利) to the world (see e.g., the “Moderation in Use” and “Moderation in Funerals” chapters from the early triads, and “Canons and Explanations” A8 from the late dialectical material). Second, when we benefit the world, we do so from inclusive love (*jian'ai* 兼愛) rather than from a more exclusive scope: when calculating benefit to the world, we consider ourselves, our near and dear, and strangers as being of fundamentally equal standing (see e.g., the “Inclusive Love” chapters from the early triadic core and, what we will soon explore in detail, “The Greater Choosing” from the late dialectical portion).

This essay assesses the relatively unquestioned talk of people as *ends* or being valued *for their own sake* in the *Mozi* (Graham 1978: 271; Lai 1993: 138; and others to be directly quoted in Section 2). People are clearly instrumentally valuable in the *Mozi*; this is the value that is highlighted by the meritocratic strands that permeate the text. The question is whether the Mohists anticipate Kant by thousands of years in suggesting that we should never treat people as *mere* means but always treat them as ends (*Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Ak. 429). An affirmative answer, historically interesting in and of itself, would also raise questions of a more philosophical nature, for one might think that this overlap with the premier deontologist would be in tension with the widely held consequentialist interpretation of the Mohists.

I will argue that the Mohists admit noninstrumental value to humanity, but what treatment an individual human receives is fundamentally a function of instrumental considerations. Section 2 will show that at least in some cases, humans have non-instrumental value. Section 3 will argue that even in these cases, noninstrumental value is not what explains humans as being proper objects of benevolence and inclusive love. True, those we are benevolent toward and inclusively love are to be treated noninstrumentally. But whether or not people fall under the aegis of benevolence and inclusive love is, in the first place, a matter of instrumental considerations, of benefit to the world. Robbers, for instance, are excluded because of the serious harm they bring to the world. Section 4 will explore how these principles operate in a particularly complex case, sacrifice of the innocent for the greater benefit. It will turn out that even if the sacrificed retain noninstrumental value, this value has little independent force. For in the case of the sacrificed, as with the case of robbers, love toward them and consequently the desire to benefit them have been suspended. Section 5 will address exegetical and philosophical objections.

Here are some preliminary remarks. The first is methodological. As mentioned, it is unclear to what extent the various authors of the *Mozi* cohered. So it might seem questionable to develop a view from “The Greater Choosing” and “The Lesser Choosing,” for instance, as if to assume coherence between and indeed even within these texts. I make no such assumption. The fact is that the texts in question are not fully obvious in their meaning when it comes to nontrivial claims. Therefore, further elucidation is necessary. One might simply provide this elucidation oneself. But if this is unproblematic, it is at least as unproblematic to develop elucidation from sources that are spatiotemporally closer, whether this means appealing to one section of “The Greater Choosing” to elucidate another, or appealing to “The Lesser

Choosing” to elucidate “The Greater Choosing.” And surely elucidation of the latter sort is more historically interesting. In effect, then, rather than assuming coherence I am creating it through a version of what is required, elucidation, a version that is more historically interesting than simply providing answers oneself.

The second preliminary remark deals with translation. I use Ian Johnston’s translation and section numbers (Johnston 2013). I sometimes adapt Johnston’s translation. For example, I sometimes adapt it in the direction of Chris Fraser’s translation (Fraser 2020a) when a significant difference is at stake and when Fraser appears to make the correct decision. While I incline toward Fraser’s decisions, Fraser omits many passages of central importance to this essay (notably, “The Greater Choosing” 44.4–5, 7, 9, 12, 13, and “Gongmeng 公孟” 48.13). The facilitation of the reader’s reference process then favors Johnston. In some instances, Johnston leaves certain words untranslated; I supply my own translation in these cases, as well as in others.

Here, I should discuss why I swap Johnston’s “universal love” for “inclusive love.” This essay will make evident that “universal” gives a fundamentally misleading vision of the relevant texts, as the relevant love along with benefit to the world turn out not to be literally universal in scope. The same charge of misleadingness might rise against “love.” The problem is that *ai* 愛 is far more general than the English “love.” It applies to our near and dear in the way that “love” would, but also applies to those far from us, even to the point of past and future generations (“The Greater Choosing” 44.10). This indicates that the Mohist authors use *ai* in a way that does not necessarily imply affection, at least not to the same degree that is commonly implied by “love.” The wide application also indicates that *ai* does not itself necessarily imply activity, at least not to the same degree that is commonly implied by “care for.” That is, if we are to love our near and dear equally to those far from us, and to love present generations equally to past and future generations, we are surely not expected to *benefit* all these parties equally. To cover so capacious an extension, *ai* ends up being unambitious in intension. It amounts to a positive evaluation involving at least a desire to benefit its object. But it does not amount to anything as robust as “respect,” as we will see the text suggest that we can love animals but purely as instruments. Despite the problems with “love,” I retain it because it is more economical than “care,” which requires a preposition in most cases, like “for” or “about” (“to care for,” moreover, overlaps confusingly with “to benefit,” my translation for what the Mohists keep distinct: *li*). Finally, “love” makes for more sensible English in certain cases (e.g., “self-lover” as opposed to “self-carer”).

2 Noninstrumental Value

I will now provide evidence for the *Mozi*’s taking people to be ends, valued for their own sake. In one early period exposition of the doctrine of inclusive love, “Inclusive Love III” 16.2 suggests that we should be *for* (*wèi* 為) others as we are for ourselves, indicating at least a pro-attitude. “Inclusive Love I” 14.3 and “Inclusive Love II” 15.3 indicate the same, though less directly; we are to *view* (*shì* 視) others as we do ourselves, where it is obviously implied that we view ourselves positively. The early texts also indicate that benefit is the only object of our pursuit (see especially the

“Moderation in Use” chapters), and that one element of benefit is the population, among other things like resources and order (“Condemning Offensive Warfare II,” “Condemning Offensive Warfare III,” “Heaven’s Intention I”).¹ But none of this precludes treating everyone in the population, including oneself, as equal cogs, instruments, of the overall machine (Ding 2008: 411–413). Against this, one might cite “Exalting Worthiness.” Encouraging and developing a political system of meritocracy, the relevant chapters clearly highlight the instrumental value of humans. But there is a curious element in this system. We are told to compensate worthy officials to an adequate degree, lest the worthy say, “This is not truly loving me (*shi ai wo* 實愛我); it is hypocritically making use of me (*yong wo* 用我)” (“Exalting Worthiness II” 9.4). Supposing we are to heed the worthy (who yet fall short of being sagely, *sheng* 聖), we should “truly” love them, which involves not merely using them. “True” love, then, would seem to require a noninstrumental element.

Yet this leaves open the question of whether this noninstrumental value is unconditional. Here, for instance, “truly loving” is demanded specifically by a *worthy* person. Or consider the fact that the evidence for Heaven’s *inclusively* loving is its accepting offerings from people and harming those who harm the innocent (as we will discuss in Section 3). Heaven’s love appears conditional on instrumental value, for Heaven benefits only those who provide offerings and rather harms those who bring harm to others.

To see whether the Mohists ever confer unconditional noninstrumental value on people, we must go beyond such early texts. Consider two passages, starting with one of the dialogues, which, again are thought to be from the Mohist middle period. “Gongmeng” 48.13 hints that it does not make sense for some things to be axiologically accounted for noninstrumentally. In reply to the Confucian claim that music is made for music, Mozi says:

You have not yet answered my question. If I ask you, “Why make a house?” and you say, “To keep out the cold in winter and the heat in summer, and also to maintain a separation between men and women,” this is telling me what a house is for. Now when I ask you, “Why make music [樂]?”, you say, “Music is

¹ I will pass over the later “Canons and Explanations” A26–27, which define benefit and harm in terms of what is pleasing and what is displeasing, respectively, without giving a concrete list of elements. The language is very unclear. First, there is no specified subject; we do not know whether benefit is pegged to what is pleasing objectively, what each *subject* is pleased *by*, what *every* subject is pleased by, or what people in general are pleased by. Moreover, the language by itself does not specify whether benefit just is constituted by what pleases or is merely evidenced by what pleases. Even Daniel Stephens, who argues that benefit just is constituted by what pleases on an individual basis, admits that the texts cannot secure this and so appeals instead to evidence outside the *Mozi* (Stephens 2021: 405). I have argued against Stephens at length (Kim 2024b), but even if the text *does* take benefit just to be constituted by what pleases on an individual basis, this pleasure would be severely capped so as to not extend beyond the classic elements of benefit. For, as I have argued in Kim 2023, the Mohists express worries about the hedonic treadmill; if one simply follows one’s pleasures, they warn, what one is satisfied with adjusts such that the pursuit of pleasure is without limit. In response, the Mohists cap one’s pursuits to the bare necessities.

for the sake of music.”² This is like saying, when I ask, “Why make a house,” that “the house is for the sake of the house” [*shi yi wèi shi ye* 室以為室也].

Apparently, it does not make sense to account for a house’s value noninstrumentally. Shifting to the later texts, “Canons and Explanations” A7 suggests that the case is different for humans, that a noninstrumental account of value is not nonsensical:

Canon: Benevolence (*ren* 仁) is to love individually (*ti* 體).

Explanation: Benevolence: Loving the self (*ji* 己) is not for the sake of the self being of use (*wèi yong ji* 為用己). It is not like loving a horse.

As with much of the “Canons and Explanations,” the brevity here makes interpretation difficult. Mohist talk of benefiting the “world” and loving “inclusively” naturally leads to the impression of the individual fading into the background of the whole, and this passage has generally been taken to address this worry. Indeed, after “Canons and Explanations” A2 talks of the unit or individual (*ti*) being a part of the whole (the same *jian* 兼 that is in “inclusive love”), A7 here clarifies that the benevolent person loves each unit (*ti*) in the whole. This “whole” refers to the same scope referred to by “inclusive love” and “benefit to the world.” For although A7’s explanation uses as an example the unit that is oneself, the author could hardly be suggesting that this is what exhausts “loving the units,” at the exclusion of others. Another way to put this is to specify what is at stake when the text claims that loving an individual person is not (purely) for the sake of the person’s usefulness, in the way that loving a horse *is* (purely) for the sake of the horse’s usefulness. Commentators have assumed that the text refers to usefulness *to the world*. This is presumably because it is hard to see *benevolence* being explicated in terms of a rather egocentric contrast, that between not loving oneself purely for the sake of usefulness to *oneself* and loving a horse purely for the sake of usefulness to *oneself*. One last preliminary remark is obvious but important: loving *x* does not entail treating *x* as noninstrumentally valuable, as the example of the horse makes clear. Consequently, and as hinted at above, *inclusively* loving others does not *analytically* entail treating them as noninstrumentally valuable. The text unpacks inclusively loving in terms of viewing others as one views oneself or being for others as one is for oneself, and one might very well view oneself as purely instrumentally valuable to the whole. It is only when supplemented by “Canons and Explanations” A7’s description of benevolence or perhaps “Exalting Worthiness II” 9.4’s talk of “truly loving” (the worthy) that inclusive love entails treating others as noninstrumentally valuable. As we will see from Qianfan ZHANG’s article (quoted below), this supplementing works the

² There are multiple ambiguities, as a referee has urged me to clarify. 為 is tracked by both “make” (*wéi*) and “for the sake of” (*wèi*). But whereas Johnston takes the same character to mean different things in each instance, he does not take 樂, which can either be translated as “music” (*yue*) or “pleasure” (*le*), to operate similarly. That is, he understands the text as saying “music is for the sake of music” rather than “music is for the sake of pleasure.” This seems right, as the case of music would otherwise *not* be “like” the case of a house. We are being asked for the reason for making *x*, and the case of music is like the case of a house in that it is allegedly nonsensical to appeal to *x* itself as the reason.

other way to the same effect. “Canons and Explanations” A7 says that benevolence involves loving *oneself* not purely for use. Supplemented by the doctrine of inclusive love, which holds that we should view and be for others as ourselves, we should also love *others* not purely for use.

It is worth quoting what commentators have said about “Canons and Explanations” A7, beyond these preliminaries. Fraser glosses this as suggesting that benevolence is

[N]ot merely caring for [or loving] humanity as a whole, but caring for units/parts of humanity—that is, each individual. The type of care required for benevolence is analogous to our care for ourselves. It is caring for others for their own sake, not as means to our ends, as we might care about a horse we use for work or transportation. (Fraser 2020a: 226; see also Fraser 2016: 160).

Zhang is more explicit about the Kantian overtones, suggesting that benevolence

[R]equires us to treat ourselves as ... ends, and never merely as means, that is, in the same way as we [love] a tool or an animal. Since Mozi also requires us to equally love everyone else in the world as we love ourselves, he seems to be expressing the Kantian principle that we ought always to treat everyone as an end and never merely as a means to any other end. Although it is perhaps too quick to identify Mozi with Kant from this single statement, it does seem reasonable to interpret Mohism as to require the guarantee of basic concern for every individual person. (Zhang 2007: 249)

Let us suppose that Fraser and Zhang are right to think that while the Mohists think it does not make sense to appeal to anything other than instrumental value when accounting for houses and horses, it *does* make sense to appeal to noninstrumental value with humans. This still leaves open some questions.

First, there is a question of demandingness. The love relevant to “Canons and Explanations” A7 is the love that is involved in benevolence. And benevolence may be a demanding virtue that is not required of everyone and is perhaps required only of the sage (Fraser 2016: 137–138, 150, 152–153, 166). However, whatever the descriptions of benevolence elsewhere, its description in “Canons and Explanations” A7 does not give an air of demandingness. Benevolence simply amounts to loving individuals not purely for reasons of usefulness. To say that non-sages need not concern themselves with benevolence is to say that almost everybody may love others like they love horses. This seems implausibly undemanding, allowing most people to love in the way that is censured in the “Inclusive Love” chapters. It would be difficult to see the point of writing “Canons and Explanations” A7 if almost everyone may love others in whatever way they want. Rather, even if benevolence is fully actualized only by the very few sages in existence, it makes more sense to demand that everyone at least strives toward benevolence (as the Stoics say of virtue).

The second question will preoccupy the rest of this essay. To whom do benevolence and inclusive love apply?³ By answering this question about scope, Section 3 will illuminate under what conditions noninstrumental value operates and how we must respond to its instances. The most complicated concrete case, as we will see in Section 4, is that of sacrificing the innocent individual for the sake of the whole.

3 Scope

This section argues that benevolence's scope is restricted out of considerations of benefit. Yet those within this restricted scope are benefited not purely for instrumental reasons but noninstrumentally. However, even if humans are noninstrumentally valuable, this is not what explains the application of benevolence and inclusive love to them.

As we have seen, "Canons and Explanations" A7 explicates benevolence as a matter of loving the individual. It turns out that any given case of loving an individual requires loving "comprehensively," which I follow commentators in assuming to have the same scope as inclusive love (whether comprehensive love and inclusive love are the same, I set aside). "The Lesser Choosing" 45.8 suggests that one does not need to ride horses comprehensively (*zhou* 周), that is, ride *all* horses, in order to be said to ride just some of this set. However, the text suggests that loving people is different; one *does* need to love comprehensively in order to be said to love just some of this set. But the analogy to riding *all* horses would seem to suggest that love of an individual and its prerequisite of comprehensive love are implausibly demanding. There are epistemic problems with knowing an indefinite number of people so as to love all these people. Such problems are explicitly addressed in "Canons and Explanations" B72–74, although in a manner that might come across as dismissive. But they are indirectly and more helpfully addressed elsewhere.

First, "The Greater Choosing" 44.13 implies that we do not have to know all people to love comprehensively. Rather, loving comprehensively involves loving those who are presumed innocent until proven guilty:

[I]⁴ You may know there are robbers in this world, but still have complete love for this world [*jīn'ai shì shì* 盡愛是世]. [J] You may know there is a robber in this house, but not have complete [hate] for this house. [K] You may know that one of two men is a robber, but not have complete [hate] for these two men.

³ This question of the scope of *whom* inclusive love applies to is different from the question of the scope of what outlooks or actions inclusive love demands. This latter question is specifically assessed by, for example, Back 2017, Defoort 2013, and Loy 2013. But they assume that by the end of the three "Inclusive Love" chapters (and by the time of the later texts), inclusive love includes literally everyone without qualification (Back 2017: 1098; Defoort 2013: 54, 60–64; Loy 2013: 500). They are joined by a wide array of scholars in thinking that the Mohists employ an unqualified scope for their love and benefit, for example, Fraser 2016: 36–37, 158–159, 171–172, 180–181; Graham 1978: 12; Lum 1977: 191; Zhang 2007: 244–245. I argue against this in Kim 2024c.

⁴ For the reader's ease, I am inserting my own section markers. I start with (I) here, because I will later quote sections of "The Greater Choosing" that come before 44.13.

[L] Although one of the men is a robber, if you don't know which one it is, how can you have complete hate [*wu* 惡] for the associate?

(I) implies two things. First, the contrast implies that one should *not* love robbers. But the text most probably implies that we *should* have complete love for the world. Second, then, complete love for the world does not entail loving every human that is in the world. (J) likewise implies two things. First, the contrast implies that one *should* hate robbers.⁵ But the text most probably implies that we should *not* have complete hate for a house containing a robber (just by virtue of that singular robber). Second, then, hating one occupant of a place does not entail hating all the place's occupants. (K) implies the same points as (J) but applied to the smallest plurality, two people. (L) importantly gives the reason as to why hating one member of a plurality does not entail hating the plurality: one does not know the identity of the robber. This implies that one should not hate a person unless the person has been proven guilty. As far as *inclusive love* is concerned, it tracks "complete love for this world," but this does not mean that we love every human in the extension of the world. Hate is the response Mohists direct toward criminals. Moreover, the lessons of "complete hate" illuminate the epistemic conditions of inclusive love. While the Mohists say we should hate someone we know to be a robber, we should not hate someone whose status we do not know. The *Mozi*'s numerous descriptions of inclusive love indicate that it applies across space and time such that there will be a non-trivial amount of unknown statuses (see "The Greater Choosing" 44.10 and 18, to be assessed in Section 4), so it seems plausible to suggest that inclusive love involves loving in lieu of knowing. This, however, is conditional; the Mohists suggest that once we *do* know someone to be a robber, we exclude this person from our love.

This two-step procedure seems more reflective of the text than the procedure Chaehyun CHONG attributes to it, a procedure that I perceive to be one-step. To reconcile the Mohist idea that we should "love people" or "love all people" with the Mohist dictum that we should *not* love robbers, even though these are people, Chong suggests that "people" or "all people" are generic terms (Chong 2018: 219–220). That is, when the Mohists tell us to "love people" or "love all people," they just mean that we should "love people *in general*" rather than love universally.⁶ There is then no tension with not loving some people, namely, robbers. However, it is

⁵ (J) and (K) feature only the adjective "complete" (*jin* 盡), without any modified noun. The passage's sense presses us to supply an antonym, "hate," for what "complete" modifies in (I), "love." Moreover, (L) supplies "complete hate" as the implied response toward robbers.

⁶ Chong rejects the interpretation that inclusive love amounts to unconditional love, that is, inalienable love of all human beings (Chong 2018). But while there is then clearly a parallel project to that of this essay, there are major differences. First, Chong thinks that the Mohists reject unconditional love only for criminals, whereas I believe that this rejection applies more widely (see Section 5). Second, Chong's preoccupation is not axiological. He discusses unconditional love but independently of noninstrumental value. Now, this second point might seem to favor Chong, insofar as he is sticking more closely to the text. However, I do not think that my axiological language is alien to the spirit of the text, which clearly raises questions about conditions under which we evaluatively consider people. It also distinguishes between valuing *x* for the sake of *x* and valuing *x* for the sake of using *x*. And to love *x* and hate *x* would appear to imply positive and negative evaluations of *x*, respectively.

difficult to read “all people” as from the very start meaning “people in general,” especially in light of “The Lesser Choosing” 45.8’s talk of riding *all* horses in parallel to its talk of loving *all* people. I think, rather, that the text is suggesting that the shift in meaning occurs when we bring in desiderative states, like love. So we should *prima facie* love literally all people (“all people” in fact means “all people,” *pace* Chong), but with a very important qualification: what the policy of “loving all people” entails changes with one’s knowledge. We discover that some people are robbers and the Mohists suggest that by their policy of “love all people” they do not *mean* that we should love robbers.

This context sensitivity comports with “The Lesser Choosing” (see also “The Greater Choosing” 44.9):

[45.5] A white horse is a horse. To ride a white horse is to ride a horse. A black horse is a horse. To ride a black horse is to ride a horse. [Some generic] Huo [獲] is a person. To love Huo is to love a person. [Some generic] Zang [臧] is a person. To love Zang is to love a person. These are examples of “it is this and is so.” [45.6] ... A robber is a person, but many robbers are not many people. There not being robbers doesn’t mean there are not people. How can this be made clear? To dislike there being many robbers is not to dislike there being many people. To wish there were no robbers is not to wish there were no people. The world is united in its agreement that this is so. If it is so, then although (one says): “A robber is a person; loving a robber is not loving a person; not loving a robber isn’t not loving a person; killing a robber is not killing a person,” there is no difficulty.... These are instances of “it is this and yet is not so.”⁷

45.5 presents the pattern of “it is this and is so.” Consider the extensional claim: Huo is a person. Shifting to a desiderative context, “loving Huo” indeed counts as “loving a person.” 45.6 presents patterns whereby there is a mismatch between extensional and desiderative claims. So even though robbers count as part of the *extension* of people, “killing or not loving robbers” does *not* count as “killing or not loving people.” Or, when we *say* that we do not wish for robbers to exist, we do

⁷ One might wonder whether I am entitled to take ethical claims in the dialectical texts at face value, given the purpose and context. I think commentators are right in taking these dialectical exercises to be in fact practically oriented; the Mohists are not engaging in logical puzzles for the sake of these puzzles (Fraser 2016: 51–53). They are responding to logical attacks on their ethical-political doctrines for the sake of defending these doctrines. Moreover, it is unclear that their arguments, taken as arguments about logic, work independently of the truth of the ethical claims. For example, the Mohists defend the claim that one should inclusively love, which involves loving *all* people in some sense. However, they assume that we should hate robber-people. Here in “The Lesser Choosing,” an analysis of logical patterns yields a rebuttal; robber-people *are* people but *hating* robber-people does not entail hating people and *loving* people does not entail loving robber-people. It is difficult to see how the analyses of such patterns get off the ground unless there is a commitment to the substance of these sorts of claims. In the present passage, it is unclear how the ethical claims render the logical points “made clear” or how “the world is united” about them, unless the writers are committed to the ethical claims.

not *mean* that we do not wish for people to exist, despite the fact that robbers are people.⁸

Let us return to benevolence. “Canons and Explanations” A7 defines benevolence in terms of loving the individual and not purely for the individual’s usefulness. “The Lesser Choosing” 45.8 suggests that loving an individual, however, requires loving comprehensively. This in turn, does *not* require loving everyone *without qualification* and is in fact sensitive to peoples’ usefulness; we do not love those who have been proven guilty (“The Greater Choosing” 44.13). Yet this does not contradict the Mohist dictum to love people, the set of which extensionally includes robbers; for loving literally all people no matter what is not what the Mohist dictum *means* (“The Lesser Choosing” 45.6).

Some clarifications are in order. First, I have not spoken much of “benefit to the world” or “benefit to people,” relevant as they are given their apparent wideness of scope.⁹ However, I take the above discussion to apply to these expressions as well. To *love* someone clearly requires at least the desire to *benefit* that person, especially in light of the contrast with hating a robber, which most probably requires at least the desire to harm (“kill”) the robber.

Second, one might wonder if the sage’s benevolence has a wider scope than comprehensive love in that it *does* extend to literally all people no matter what. Denying this is the reason that the case of hate is important. It is difficult to make sense of the idea that the love relevant to the sage’s benevolence extends to everyone without qualification while hate *should* be extended to some people.

One last clarification merits an extended discussion. Benevolence involves loving the individual and not purely for usefulness, which may seem to contradict the idea that the scope of benevolence *is* sensitive to usefulness in that it does not apply to harmful people like robbers. The contradiction is merely apparent, however. The Mohists set the scope of their concern on the basis of usefulness, and then treat those within that scope noninstrumentally. And there is nothing contradictory to choosing the members of a team for its performance (recruiting and firing members on the basis of what is most useful for the team) and then treating those members noninstrumentally. This sort of dynamic appears in earlier Mohist treatments of governance, whereby it is not that there are no conditions under which we may discount some people, but that the conditions under which people are discounted should be the right conditions (Zhang 2007: 244–246). The relatively early “Exalting Worthiness III” attacks contemporary nepotism in a fashion that may be controversial

⁸ Fraser suggests that the problem concerns the action-types rather than the relevant parties: “although robbers are people, killing them (capital punishment for banditry) is not killing people (murder)” (Fraser 2020b: 81n389; see also Graham 1978: 488). However, action-types do not seem to be at stake at all with the parallel claims about robbers *existing*. This is more suggestive of my reading, which takes the problem to concern the relevant parties rather than the action-types.

⁹ See also Kim 2024c, where I argue that in the early texts, Heaven’s intent plays a retrospective role with respect to benefit to the world; the latter’s scope takes its cue from Heaven, which appears to exclude poor moral performers. The early texts depict Heaven as constantly protecting the innocent (see end of Section 3), so it is perhaps no coincidence that as Heaven fades in the later texts (see Footnote 20), we witness greater permissiveness as to what can be done to the innocent.

today: “even if a blood relative of a king, duke or great officer is lame, sick, deaf or blind, or is evil like Jie [桀] and Zhou [紂], he will not fail to find advancement” (10.5). The text promotes a sort of political inegalitarianism precisely when promoting impartiality; the standards for governance are detached from family ties but presuppose the innate and then developed ability to rise early to and retire late from hearing cases and wisely adjudicating them (“Exalting Worthiness II” 9.2, “Moderation in Funerals III” 25.5, “Condemning Music I” 32.9). It is not that *everyone* is permitted a role in governance but that everyone is not barred on the basis of irrelevant criteria. And as seen, those who worthily occupy such roles ought to be “truly,” noninstrumentally, loved (“Exalting Worthiness II” 9.4).

The early texts hint at the fact that the situation is similar with inclusive love as with governance (for more analysis, see Kim 2024c). That is, it is not that everyone is loved no matter their deeds but that everyone is not hated on the basis of irrelevant criteria. We can see this from the reactions of spiritual entities, which the Mohists take as normative. Positively, Heaven’s intent is recorded as approving of the sage-kings on the grounds that “those I love, these men love inclusively. Those I benefit, these men benefit inclusively” (“Heaven’s Intention I” 26.5; see also “Heaven’s Intention III” 28.7). Inclusion, apparently, is not to be adopted to a universal extreme, as it is *only those* (*ci* 此) *Heaven loves* that one should love inclusively. Negatively, exclusion, while berated (“Inclusive Love I” 14.2, “Inclusive Love II” 15.2, “Inclusive Love III” 16.1), is not to be *rejected* to a universal extreme. There is no sense that the writers berate Heaven and the ghosts when depicting these as reacting harshly to those who kill innocent people, those like tyrants (e.g., “Percipient Ghosts III” 31.4, 31.6). The reaction is nothing short of complete annihilation.¹⁰ Such annihilation is also prescribed regarding one’s military enemies in the middle-period “Against the Confucians II” 39.7 and the late-period defensive warfare material. The latter goes further, however, in being explicit about the outlook underlying the purge. It speaks of encouraging resentment (*yuan* 怨) toward the enemy (“Preparing the Walls and Gates” 52.2, “Orders and Commands” 70.26), as the dialectical texts encourage hate toward robbers. The language does not suggest this idea: we love (or, what is perhaps more appropriately neutral here, “care about”) the cruel and wicked but decide on balance that it is beneficial to the world to utterly destroy the cruel and wicked. The language suggests rather that we do not love the cruel and wicked in the first place.

Before proceeding and turning back to the dialectical texts, I do want to address a wrinkle relating to what I have just cited from the earlier texts. “Heaven’s Intention III” 28.5 does give as evidence for Heaven’s loving inclusively that it gives food

¹⁰ There may yet be a question as to what level of culpability, both in terms of one’s own responsibility and what one is responsible for doing, merits annihilation. Some of those in the aggressor’s army are called “people of Heaven,” and it is lamented that they are being used to kill other people of Heaven (“Condemning Offensive Warfare III” 19.3). The fact that some aggressors are called “people of Heaven” along with the innocents suggests that they are still included in “benefit to the world,” rather than being cast out from consideration entirely.

inclusively.¹¹ This would seem to suggest that Heaven loves everyone *tout court*. However, the passage continues to say that the evidence for Heaven's giving food inclusively is, ultimately, that people offer sacrifices to Heaven. Yet the *Mozi*, here in "Heaven's Intention III" (28.9) and elsewhere (e.g., "Condemning Offensive Warfare III" 19.3), depicts some people as failing vis-à-vis these offerings. Indeed, "Moderation in Funerals III" 25.9 suggests that in response to failed sacrifices, Heaven and the ghosts will say "Whether [these people] exist or not makes no difference" and will "bring down misfortune on them, and punish and abandon them. And why shouldn't this be so!"¹² It hardly seems that love extends to those who fail (to some great degree). So the scope here is not everyone *tout court*. Heaven loves without *wanton* discrimination, yet loves with discrimination that is sensitive to how people relate to Heaven.

Yet, as Dennis Schilling has pointed out in conversation, the parallel in "Heaven's Intention II" might seem to contradict this with its evidence of Heaven's love for people: its creation of celestial bodies, seasons, and various natural resources (27.6). The benefits of this creation would seem to have a scope that is universal *tout court* and so would seem to evidence love that has a scope that is universal *tout court*. However, there are two problems with this. Shortly before the passage, 27.4 says that "if people don't do what Heaven desires, or do what Heaven doesn't desire, Heaven in turn will not do what people desire, but will do what people do not desire. And what is it that people do not desire? I say it is sickness and disease, misfortune and calamity," things the passage explicitly ties to the natural resources and seasons mentioned as evidence for *love* in 27.6. It is hard to see how these people are receiving Heaven's love, as they are receiving the opposite of the expression of Heaven's love. Moreover, 27.7 goes on to cite Heaven's *harming* such people as precisely the evidence for Heaven's *loving* innocent people. Another reason for doubting the inference of unqualifiedly universal love from Heaven here is the uniqueness of the ultimate evidence, the creation. It is an analogy that only goes so far. So, for example, "Inclusive Love III" 16.9 quotes the "Great Oath" as speaking "of the wide extent and greatness of King Wen's [文] inclusive love for the world being analogical [*pi* 譬] to the sun and moon, which inclusively illumine all parts of the world without partiality [*wu you si* 無有私]." The specification of analogy implies not only sameness but difference; King Wen is ultimately not a celestial body with the corresponding capacity of illumination (and even this may have its limits, as "Exalting Worthiness II" 9.9 depicts Bo Gun's 伯鯨 being cut off from, in parallel, the ruler's illumination and love). If we turn away from the inexact analogy of "Heaven's Intention II" back to the content of Heaven's intention, what "Heaven's intention says" (*tian yi yue* 天意曰), it is to praise those who love and benefit (only) those whom

¹¹ The parallel "Heaven's Intention I" 26.6 provides evidence only for Heaven's loving the world's common people, not for its loving *inclusively*.

¹² Strictly speaking, the text mentions the supreme deity or Lord on High rather than Heaven. However, as Fraser notes of "Heaven's Intention I" 26.3, "the Lord on High (the Shāng [商] dynasty ancestor-deity) and Heaven (the Zhōu [周] deity, whom the Mohists revere)... are spoken of as two distinct entities, yet offering sacrifices to the Lord and the ghosts and spirits is either a means of or counts as part of the same activity as praying to Heaven for blessings" (Fraser 2020a: 217–218).

Heaven loves and benefits (“Heaven’s Intention I” 26.5). When speaking in exact terms rather than by analogy, the text qualifies the scope of love.

4 The Case of Sacrifice

So far, we have seen that benevolence has a restricted scope: benevolence requires loving individually, which requires loving comprehensively, but some robber-people are evidently excluded. But as far as those who are *not* excluded, we ought to noninstrumentally love them. The important question at this point is what happens when noninstrumental love for a particular individual comes up against benefit to the whole. This section will address the complicated case of sacrificing the innocent. We will discover that the fact that someone is noninstrumentally valuable does not explain why we love that person. The case of sacrificing innocents turns out to be, along with the case of robbers, another case of suspending love for people out of consideration of benefit, without contradicting the policy of “loving people.” Whether or not these people retain noninstrumental value is unclear. What is clear is that this noninstrumental value would have hardly any force.

Sacrifice of the innocent is touched upon at several junctures of “The Greater Choosing,” starting with 44.3:

[A] With respect to parts, there is the weighing up of light and heavy. This is called “weighing” [*quan* 權]. Weighing the wrong so that it counts as right and condemning the wrong so that it counts as wrong are “weighing” and “exact” [*zheng* 正].¹³ In terms of benefit, cutting off a finger to preserve the wrist is to choose the greater [benefit], whereas in terms of harm, it is to choose the lesser [harm]. In terms of harm, choosing the lesser is not to choose harm, but to choose benefit. What is chosen is controlled by others. When you meet a robber, to cut off a finger in order to save one’s life is a benefit. Meeting a robber is the harm. [B] Cutting off a finger and cutting off a wrist,¹⁴ if benefit to

¹³ “權，非為是也，非非為非也，權，正也。” In this sentence, I diverge sharply from Johnston’s textual decisions and converge on Fraser’s (44.3a). Johnston yields a distinction whereby “weighing” does not implicate right and wrong: “Weighing is not about being right or wrong. It is about the weighing up being correct.” This is to read 為 as a preposition (*wèi*), translating as “about.” Weighing then contrasts with seeking, explored in (C), which apparently *is* about right and wrong. However, this distinction does not reflect the text. Seeking is specified as a type of weighing, so it is hard to see how the former but not the latter implicates right and wrong. More plausible is Fraser’s reading of 為 as a verb (*wéi*), translating as “count as.” Resulting are four categories of evaluations. Weighing what is *prima facie* wrong (on the basis, presumably, of distinguishing, *bian* 辨) and ending up with the determination that it is right is an example of (1) an all-considered, post-weighing calculation (A), while weighing what is *prima facie* wrong and ending up with the determination that it is after all wrong is an example of (2) an “exact” or “direct” calculation (A) (Fraser 2020b: 68n340). Either sort of calculation can be rendered (3) at the level of one’s own benefit or (4) at the level of the world’s benefit, with latter such calculations being a special sort of weighing, namely, “seeking” (C). In all these cases, we are determining benefit. And even in the cases of weighing that focus just on one’s own benefit, it is hard to see this as not ultimately connected and subordinated to benefit to the world, which clearly implicates rightness.

¹⁴ Fraser 2020b: 68n342 suggests that there is a textual break here, against Johnston’s arrangement. My interpretation does not hinge on either reading. We can read the point about “benefit to the world” being exemplified by both the finger/wrist example and the life/death example (per Johnston) or just the latter (per Fraser).

the world is alike, there is no choosing; death [and] life, if benefit is the same, there is no choosing. Killing one person to preserve the world, is not to kill one person to benefit the world. Killing oneself to preserve the world, *is* to kill oneself to benefit the world.¹⁵ [C] With respect to the conduct of affairs, there is weighing up of light and heavy. This is called “seeking” (*qiu* 求). Seeking for something is not choosing the lesser among harms.

When weighing one’s own benefit in particular, “what is chosen is controlled by others,” but there is a basis for choosing one option over another; the options are not the same in this sense (A). Distinct from this sort of weighing is seeking (C). Instead of focusing on one’s own benefit, “seeking” widens the context to the world’s benefit (B). Unlike in the previous context, in this wider context, there is *not* a basis for choosing between “cutting off a finger and cutting off a wrist” or between “dying and living”—if the benefit to the world is the same (B). Conversely, an individual’s living and an individual’s dying *do* make a difference *only* if the benefit to the world is *different*. There is little reason to believe that we should unconditionally adhere to the advisories of our “weighing” our own benefit (A) instead of adhering to them only on the condition that they do not contradict the advisory of our “seeking” the *world’s* benefit (B–C). As a referee has pointed out, the overall structure of the passage suggests this; just as there is hardly a question that one should give up a finger to preserve one’s life, that the choice is “controlled” by circumstances (A), there is hardly a question that one should give up one’s life to preserve the world (B).

The key question is what this implies about an individual’s noninstrumental value, that an individual’s living or dying makes no difference unless it makes a difference to benefit to the world. “The Greater Choosing” 44.7 is helpful insofar as it brings in the language of “for the sake of” and does so in reference to both the individual and the world:

[D] [To love the virtuous] Yu thickly for the sake of the world is for the sake of his being Yu. [E] To love Yu thickly for the sake of the world is, in fact, for the sake of Yu’s love of man. [F] [To love] Yu thickly for what he [does] adds to the world, whereas [to love] Yu thickly [independently of what he does] does

¹⁵ “殺一人以存天下，非殺一人以利天下也；殺己以存天下，是殺己以利天下。” Johnston’s version suggests that *if* killing one person would save the world, it is *wrong* to kill one person to benefit the world, while Fraser’s version suggests that killing one person to save the world is *not* killing one person to benefit the world. The first difference regards the conditionality; Johnston takes the present section as implicitly conditional and Fraser not. Intertwined with this difference is the rendering of *fei* 非 as “wrong” by Johnston and “not” by Fraser. Johnston’s conditional rendering *requires* the rendering of “wrong,” for it is unclear what the text would mean by suggesting “*if* killing one person would preserve the world, it is *not* killing one person to benefit the world.” However, other texts suggest that the later Mohists do *not* hold that it is *wrong* to kill one person to benefit the world (e.g., the defensive warfare material, “The Greater Choosing” 44.21). This denies Johnston’s conditional rendering. Fraser’s rendering highlights a fact to be explored in Section 5, that although killing oneself and killing another may both feature in the extension of killing some person to preserve the world, only the former counts as “killing some person in order to *benefit* the world.”

not add to the world. [G] Likewise, to hate a robber for what he does adds to the world, whereas to hate a robber [independently of what he does] does not add to the world. [H] The love of people does not exclude the self, for the self lies within that which is loved. If the self lies within that which is loved, then [that] love [i.e., love of people] adds to the self.

[D] 為天下厚禹，為禹也。[E] 為天下厚愛禹，乃為禹之人愛也。[F] 厚禹之加於天下，而厚禹不加於天下。[G] 若惡盜之為加於天下，而惡盜不加於天下。[H] 愛人不外己，己在所愛之中。己在所愛，愛加於己。¹⁶

Let me make some provisional remarks about the text. I have inserted “to love” in lieu of a subject in (D) and (F) because I take it to be implied (that *something* is implied is suggested by the fact that it is unclear what “thickly” would be modifying otherwise).¹⁷ First, the subject “to love” is positively implied by (E), which does supply “to love” as the subject. Second, it is negatively implied by the parallel case of the robber (G), which involves the opposite of “loving,” namely, “hating.” I take the parallel case of the robber to similarly justify an insertion in (F); just as hating the robber for what he *does* (wéi 為) adds to the world (G), loving Yu 禹 for what he *does* adds to the world (F).

I have removed Johnston’s insertion of a negation in (D) since this insertion lacks textual basis. There is some *philosophical* basis for the insertion, in that we might be tempted to say that loving Yu for the sake of the world is *not* for the sake of his being the individual Yu. After all, (E) and (F) go on to *contrast* loving Yu as an individual with loving Yu for what he does and thereby adds to the world. But we can get this philosophical sense without the insertion of a negation. We can read (D) as suggesting that, in a way, loving Yu for the sake of the world is loving Yu for the sake of Yu, since Yu is a part of the world. But (E) then qualifies this, as might be the force of the “in fact” (nai 乃) emphasizing the predicative *ye* 也, and we can read (E) as suggesting that, when we *say* that we love Yu for the sake of the world, we really *mean* that we love Yu for the sake of how he loves other people. (F) explains this. If we love Yu full stop, this does not “add to the world” (i.e., have a bearing on the world) because loving Yu full stop is just independent of his bearing on the world; so it is misleading to say that when we love Yu *for the sake of the world*, we really mean that we love Yu full stop. In contrast, if Yu is acting (over and above

¹⁶ “The Greater Choosing” 44.12 also speaks of treating people for the sake of their being people, but its comments are too cryptic to make much out. It talks of benefiting people as for the sake of their being people and benefiting people, specifically enriching (*fu* 富) people, as *not* for the sake of their being people. Further, it talks of benefiting people, specifically ordering (*zhi* 治) them, as rather for the sake of ghosts.

¹⁷ “The Greater Choosing” 44.6 allows for differential benefit of people within the context of loving them as equals at a fundamental level (Fraser 2020b: 70–71). So a parent might love her child thickly and not do so to a child on the other side of the world, while recognizing that both children are of fundamentally equal status. Though these children share this equal status at a fundamental level, the parent does not have an obligation to benefit the child on the other side of the world in exactly the same way. Put more generally: loving inclusively requires loving others as one loves oneself in that one counts others as being of fundamentally equal status, but it does not preclude loving some thickly and benefiting them more and loving others thinly and benefiting them less.

existing), this *does* “add to the world.” Here, it is not misleading to say that when we love Yu for the sake of the world, we mean that we love Yu for how he loves others, which bears on the world.¹⁸

This contextual shifting comports with what we have seen in Section 3’s discussion of “The Lesser Choosing,” for example, that “not loving robber-people” does *not* mean “not loving people,” despite the fact that robber-people *do* count under the *extension* of people. Here, “The Greater Choosing” 44.7 suggests that loving a part of the world, Yu, does not necessarily add to the world. (H) suggests that the case is different when discussing love of the *whole*. There is no hint that one must love the whole specifically for the sake of the whole’s love of the individual, for how this love of the whole adds to the individual. Rather, simply by virtue of the fact that the individual is in the set of the whole does love of the whole add to the individual.

What does this imply about the final value of humans? Let us start with (G)’s case of robbers. Considered purely as an individual, the robber is no different from Yu in that at this level, both do not add to the world. Yet we are to *love* Yu and *hate* the robber. Apparently, then, when (H) implies that we should *love* the whole, the fact that we can consider the robber as an individual part of the whole just as we can consider Yu as an individual part of the whole does nothing to prevent the robber from being excluded from the policy of loving the whole. Even though robbers count as people and can be considered individual members of this set no less than Yu, when the Mohists exhort us to “love people,” they do not mean to “love robbers” thereby. Supposing that the Mohists take the robbers to have final value *qua* individuals (their exhortations to *hate* robbers notwithstanding), this final value does not appear to do much for them. By parity of reasoning, it does not do much for Yu, either. Whether we value (love) or disvalue (hate) an individual *for the individual’s sake* is a question posterior to whether we value or disvalue *simpliciter* the individual, and this question takes its cue from how the individual adds to the world.

This brings us back to “The Greater Choosing” 44.3’s idea that the life and death of an individual is a matter of indifference if benefit to the world is the same. We have seen that as far as being included in the policy of “loving the world” instead of being hated, consideration of what the individual “adds to the world” does all the work and consideration of the individual as such does none. It is the fact that Yu, a virtuous ruler, positively impacts the world, that merits love. Or one could *hate* the sinner (i.e., the robber) for being who he is, as distinct from the sin, but it is the sin that merits him hate in the first place. Now, the idea that the life and death of an individual wholly depends on benefit to the world can be seen to include cases that we have just been assessing; that is, choosing the life or death of individuals might be determined by the sorts of acts they add to the world. But this still leaves open two questions. First, what about other cases, whereby one considers sacrificing an individual not primarily for how this individual’s acts have added to the world but

¹⁸ An alternative way to preserve the contrast is as follows. Loving the whole as such implicates loving the individual but not vice versa. So we may say that loving Yu for the sake of the world is for the sake of his being Yu (D) *and* for the sake of his love of others (E). We just cannot say that loving Yu for the sake of his being Yu, as such, is for the sake of the world.

primarily for how such a sacrifice would add to the world? An instructive case is that of scapegoating a citizen who thus far has engaged in beneficial deeds. Second, would such sacrifice of the innocent count as a result of including this person in “love the world” or as a result of excluding this person, like one excludes the robber?

These questions bring us to “The Greater Choosing” 44.18:

[M] The nurturing of the sage is based on benevolence and not on benefit and love. [N] Benefit and love arise from concern. The concern for former times is not the concern for the present day. Love for former peoples is not the love for present peoples. Love for [some generic person] Huo as loving another arises from being concerned for Huo’s benefit and not from being concerned for [some other generic person] Zang’s benefit; [O] yet loving Zang as loving another is the same as loving Huo as loving another. [P] If removing love of them [i.e., Zang and Huo] benefits the world, can one not do away with it?

[M] 聖人之附 [...] 也，仁而無利愛。[N] 利愛生於慮。昔者慮也，非今日之慮；昔者之愛人也，非今之愛人也。愛獲之愛人也，生於慮獲之利，非慮臧之利也；[O] 而愛臧之愛人也，乃愛獲之愛人也。[P] 去其愛而天下利，弗能去也。

This is a complicated passage, beginning with its framing (M). The sage, in some fashion, operates on the basis of benevolence and *not* benefit or love. No illumination about “benevolence” is forthcoming elsewhere in “The Greater Choosing,” with the character only appearing in a cryptic analogy (44.21.7). But it would be implausible for the benevolent sage to not benefit and love others as a matter of general principle. Indeed, 44.8 depicts the sage as desiring the people’s benefit, and 44.1 depicts the sage as loving and benefiting people, where loving (and desiring to benefit) and (actually) benefiting can come apart, as 44.2’s example of taking music to benefit one’s son when it actually does not constitutes a case of loving but *not* benefiting one’s son. Now, 44.10 invokes a saying that the sage has love but not benefit, but this is immediately contrasted with Mozi’s sayings. Rather than cordoning off the sage from benefit and love, 44.18 is more plausibly construed as making a point of primacy; I believe something like this is behind Johnston’s over-translation of “based on,” which indicates that the sage’s conduct is ultimately rooted in benevolence rather than in benefit or love. This in turn might involve one or both of the following options. The point might be *psychological*, claiming that as a matter of descriptive fact the sage acts from a benevolent character in a nonaction (*wu wéi* 無為) vein, without calculating much at all, let alone in terms of benefit. Or it might be *motivational*, whereby the sage himself takes benevolence rather than benefit or love as the reason favoring a given action. This has become a common theme in the consequentialist literature, whereby one should not constantly reason about global utility (e.g., one benefits one’s friend for the friend’s sake, not for the sake of global utility). I do not think that the point is *justificatory*, in that the author takes benevolence and not benefit to be the ultimate criterion of rightness. This would represent a drastic innovation in doctrine, without explanation locally or elsewhere.

There is a second issue, one involving normative scope. (M) talks of the sage, an ideal agent, and so there is some question as to whether what follows is binding upon the rest of humanity. Let us suppose that (M) *is* in fact cordoning off the sage, in some

way, from benefit and love. In that case, the rest of the passage would be speaking to non-sages, as it proceeds to speak precisely in terms of benefit and love. But setting this possibility aside, (N), (O), and (P) hardly seem restricted to the sage. (N) and (O) appear to conceptualize love of certain parties in a subject-independent way; there is hardly the suggestion that love of present generations and love of former generations may be weighed however we wish. And (P)'s suggestion that one cannot but suspend love in certain instances has no hint of being applied only to the sage; (P) does not seem to suggest that non-sages may do whatever they want here, to suspend love or not.

With these preliminary caveats in mind, let us attend to the passage's doctrine. When one loves Huo 獲, this is clearly instigated by considering the benefit of Huo in particular (N). *Axiologically*, however, all cases of loving a person are the same; the doctrine of inclusive love suggests that we should love bygone, present, and future generations the same ("The Greater Choosing" 44.10), and love Huo, Zang 臧, our near and dear, and ourselves the same (O). This equal *love* of the relevant parties, however, is compatible with differential *benefit* of some individuals (or generations). As the conclusion of "The Greater Choosing" puts it with one of its cryptic analogies, "Although all are loved equally, one may be chosen and killed; the analogy lies in a rat in a hole" (44.21.6). "All are loved equally," 44.18 indicates, insofar as they are loved qua another person (and insofar as they are unlike criminals in being loved at all). Yet "one may be chosen and killed" presumably on the basis of loving "for the sake of the world" or "for what the person adds to the world" (to borrow 44.7's language). Although 44.21.6's analogy is cryptic, what precedes it is sufficiently clear to suggest the permissibility of scapegoating. Out of those we love equally (i.e., non-robbers), we may yet pick one out to kill. And it is implausible to take this choice as arbitrary and based on anything other than benefit to the world. This answers the first question I posited before expositing 44.18. 44.3 suggests that life and death are indifferent if benefit to the world is the same. This includes not only 44.7's case of love (and benefit) and hate (and harm) *not* being a matter of indifference if the individual's action's impact on the world is *not* the same. 44.18 indicates that it also includes discounting innocents, those whose own acts are not such as to discount them, out of consideration of benefit to the world.

(P) answers the second question, as to whether scapegoating in such instances is compatible with loving this individual or an example of hating this individual or something in between. Now, Fraser (44.25) translates the first part along the lines of the conditional I have adopted from Johnston: "if removing love of them benefits the world." But whereas Johnston renders the last part as a rhetorical question ("can one not do away with it?"), Fraser renders it as a statement ("one cannot do away with it"). The answer to Johnston's question is the opposite of Fraser's statement; that is, the answer to the rhetorical question "can one not do away with it?" is "one cannot not do away with it."

I do not think the text settles the issue. Again, (P) says, "去其愛而天下利，弗能去也。" I do not think that the lack of a question particle and the presence of the concluding *ye* 也 count against Johnston and for Fraser. First, there is nothing ungrammatical about the suppression of a question particle. Second, the usage of *ye* in the rest of the passage is so variegated that it loses its specific force. It is sometimes used to mark off a topic and other times used as a nominalizer, and in ways that defy

the expectations of parallelism. In (P), particularly, it is unclear what emphatic function it has at the end of what is rendered by both Fraser and Johnston as an apodosis of a conditional.

So, as occurs not infrequently with ancient Chinese texts, we must rely on the overall sense. If we adopt Fraser's rendering (as assumed by Lai 1993: 138), love of the individual supersedes what the entire *Mozi* leads us to believe is supreme, at least according to the dominant consequentialist reading of the Mohists which Fraser himself adopts: benefit to the world. For instance, while we have seen "Canons and Explanations" A7 define benevolence in terms of loving the individual noninstrumentally, we have seen that what individuals we love in the first place is a function of benefit to the world. "Canons and Explanations" A8 defines what is right in terms of benefit and explicitly pegs the scope to the world, and "The Greater Choosing" 44.6 subordinates the question of whether one should love thickly or thinly to what is right. Supposing we understand "what is right" in terms of "Canons and Explanations" A8 and indeed in terms of what the rest of the *Mozi* would lead us to expect, this is to subordinate questions of love to questions of benefit to the world. It is possible that (P) was written by authors other than those of the rest of the "Greater Choosing" and of the "Canons and Explanations," but it is difficult to come up with an acceptable explanation for why the writer of (P) would contradict the rest of the *Mozi* on such a central issue.

It seems therefore better to adopt Johnston's reading, whereby we cannot but do away with love of the individual when it comes up against benefit to the world. It is one thing to exclude robbers from "love of the world," but when (P) implies that we should remove love of "them" to benefit the world, "them" refers to the ordinary individuals Huo and Zang. These individuals were the examples from "The Lesser Choosing" 45.5 (see Section 3), whereby Huo and Zang are people and so loving them means loving people. In contrast, 45.6 indicates that robbers are people but not loving them does not mean not loving people. "The Greater Choosing" 44.18 then implies that even in the case of non-criminals, we should not love them if not loving them benefits the world (to some unspecified degree).¹⁹ Huo and Zang, as parts of the whole and members of the "love people" policy, are benefited noninstrumentally. But they may be "chosen" or, what is perhaps a better translation for *ze* 擇 that differentiates it from related characters, "picked out" (44.21.6), and all of this may be suspended if it benefits the world.

Let me sum up by spelling out the relevant conditions. The fact that *x* extensionally belongs to the set of people or of the world is not a sufficient condition for *x* being included in the policy of loving or benefiting people or the world. This is shown by the case of robber-people being people but nevertheless not being targets of the "love people" policy (see Section 3's analysis of "The Lesser Choosing"

¹⁹ One might wonder if even the slightest uptick in benefit would justify suspending love of some innocent people. This would be plausible if the Mohists operate on the principle of *maximizing* benefit to the world, which seems assumed by the literature (with the exception of Kim 2023: 489–490; Lum 1977: 191; and Zhang 2007: 248). Yet their stripped-down vision of life suggests maximization is not what they have in mind. I suspect, then, that a large amount of benefit would have to be at stake to suspend love of some innocents.

45.6), and by the case of Huo and Zang being people and non-robbers yet having love of them suspended (“The Greater Choosing” 44.18). I will leave open whether hate and suspension of love are exactly the same for the Mohists. Both entail exclusion from the policy of love/benefit the world/people but only the former appears entailed by harmful acts that one adds to the world.

X being included in the policy of loving and benefiting people or the world *is* a sufficient condition for x’s being loved and benefited noninstrumentally.²⁰ This is indicated by the fact that benevolence, which has the same scope as comprehensive and inclusive love (see Section 3), requires noninstrumental love of the individuals within this scope (see Section 2’s analysis of “Canons and Explanations” A7).

X’s being loved and benefited noninstrumentally is distinct from x’s being noninstrumentally valuable (x might be noninstrumentally valuable yet y might wrongly treat x purely instrumentally). The texts do not make clear the status of those who drop out of “love the world.” Do robber-people, for instance, have noninstrumental value even though, far from being included in “love the world,” they are *hated* (both in terms of what they add to the world and in terms independent of this, according to “The Greater Choosing” 44.7)? Do Huo and Zang, who, before they were chosen for sacrifice, were included in “love the world” and thereby loved and benefited noninstrumentally, have noninstrumental value *after* they have been chosen for sacrifice? Perhaps the reason why the Mohists do not clearly answer this question is because even if both cases involve retention of noninstrumental value, the endpoint hardly differs. Whether in the case of innocents or the case of robbers, there is exclusion from inclusively loving and benefiting the world. At least from the Mohist point of view, it is hard to see what matters outside of that.

5 Objections

Let me address some worries. One might wonder about the philosophical payoff of (P) when it is read in Johnston’s way. That is, it might be unclear why the Mohists insist on making the point that in sacrificing the innocent, we are suspending love of them. To use less emotive terms and render this discussion more relatable to contemporary philosophical discussions, we might ask, as Daniel Stephens has asked in conversation, why sacrificing people for the sake of the whole requires suspending care about or consideration of these people or their well-being. Utilitarians might

²⁰ Importantly, this implies either that nonhuman animals are not included in the policy of loving or benefiting the world or that “the world” does not refer to them in the first place, for horses are loved on a purely instrumental basis (as the contrast in “Canons and Explanations” A7 makes clear). Indeed, the earlier texts elaborate upon “benefit to the world” only in terms of benefiting Heaven, ghosts, and people, and sometimes in that very elaboration mention animals only as objects of ritual sacrifice (“Condemning Offensive Warfare III” 19.1, 19.2; “Heaven’s Intention I” 26.7; “Heaven’s Intention II” 27.8; “Heaven’s Intention III” 28.8). Later texts refer to Heaven and ghosts only in passing while retaining exhortations to sacrifice animals (“Sacrifices for Meeting Enemies” from the defensive warfare material), indicating that “benefit to the world” has effectively shrunk in reference to human beings (but see Footnote 16 on ghosts).

say that when benefiting all, we consider everyone as being equal in our calculations, and that when we sacrifice some for the sake of all, this is not a matter of considering some people less or not at all in our calculations. Rather, while we care about the sacrificed people no less than anyone else, we take it that it will be better for all on balance to sacrifice them. There is no need to say that if one sacrifices people, then one does not care about them. In this way, utilitarians can adopt “unconditional love” for humans.

The question that the Mohists and indeed early Chinese thinkers in general raise in reply is this. As early as *Analec*s 12.10, we have the idea that it makes little sense (at least in most cases) to say that *x* loves *y* yet aims to kill *y*. When one aims to kill a criminal, one can hardly be said to love the criminal. The Mohists respect this conceptual bond between loving and not desiring to harm, which is why they face a tension that (at least some) Confucians do not, that between inclusively loving people yet killing criminals. Their solution is to suggest that robber-people do not count in their policy of “love people.” As we have just seen, it is why the Mohists insist that sacrificing the innocent cannot count as caring about or loving them as equals to everyone else in the whole. Both points may sound jarring to some, but the Mohists ask whether it really makes sense to love, care about, or value everyone equally and yet aim to harm someone to an extreme degree, even to the point of death.

Another worry with Johnston’s reading of (P) comes in the form of a direct exegetical objection: “The Greater Choosing” does not in fact permit harming (on balance) the innocents and thereby suspending love of them. 44.3’s (B) suggests that killing another to preserve the world is *not* to kill another to benefit the world whereas to kill *oneself* to preserve the world *is* to kill oneself to benefit the world. This does not lend itself to the permissibility of sacrificing innocent people besides oneself. Moreover, it is confusing, for extensionally, both are cases of killing some person to preserve the world. That is, why is it that killing *x* to preserve the world is killing *x* to benefit the world only if *x* is oneself and not if *x* is another (cf. Wu Mazi’s 巫馬子 proposal in “Geng Zhu 耕柱” 46.18)?

It is telling that 44.3’s (B) shifts from “preserving the world” to “benefiting the world.” Benefiting the world most probably includes preserving the world in its extension, yet the text indicates that there is a crucial intentional difference between killing *oneself* to preserve the world and killing *another* to preserve the world. Only the former is a case of “killing the person in question to *benefit* the world.” I think the reason for this is that benefit to the world is an essentially other-directed goal such that it is problematic to say that one is going to kill another to benefit the world. On the other hand, benefit to the world is only accidentally self-directed such that it is *not* problematic to say that one is going to kill oneself to benefit the world.

To see this more clearly, let us return to “The Greater Choosing” 44.7 and juxtapose it with another section, 44.9. These sections present a case like that of 44.3’s (B), both by highlighting intentions and by positing an asymmetry between self and other, though in more positive terms (“loving” rather than “killing”). 44.7’s (H) suggests that “love of mankind does not exclude the self, for the self lies within that which is loved. If the self lies within that which is loved, then love adds to the self.” So loving the world includes loving oneself. Yet 44.9 adamantly denies that loving

the world and therefore oneself makes one a “self-lover.”²¹ This is a pejorative label, for it is otherwise unclear why 44.9 is at pains to deny the entailment.²² Put together, 44.7 suggests that there is no problem with loving the world and thereby oneself, while 44.9 insinuates that at the intentional level, there is a problem with loving the world to *love oneself*. Loving the world is essentially other-directed.

Returning to 44.3, nothing prevents killing another (innocent) person to preserve the world from *extensionally* counting as a case of killing another to benefit the world. As counting as benefitting the world, which we have no reason to doubt as counting as right, killing another to preserve the world is clearly permissible. Chong disagrees. Inferring from “Geng Zhu” 46.4 that an intention can be right or wrong even before any benefit or harm has been brought about, Chong thinks that “the Mohists think that killing an innocent person does not bring benefit while killing oneself does” because they “think that only the latter has the intention of benefiting people” (Chong 2018: 219). Even if Chong’s interpretation of “Geng Zhu” 46.4 is correct, it is hard to say that the intention of killing another person extensionally excludes the action in question from benefiting the world, for this would seem to exclude actions that the Mohists frequently condone if not prescribe: defensive warfare and execution of criminals and tyrants. Still, the Mohists do seem to posit an intentional tension. Just as they say that loving people does not entail loving robbers even though these are people, they suggest that killing another to preserve the world does not entail killing another to benefit the world, even though preserving the world benefits the world.²³ There is something problematic in their minds about formulating the essentially other-directed goal of benefit to the world in terms of harming others.²⁴ Yet, as just mentioned, the Mohists clearly endorse harming those who harm (to some unspecified degree).

Here is a broader philosophical objection that goes beyond Johnston’s reading of (P) to the rest of the essay, picking up from the conclusion of Section 2: teams,

²¹ “Zang’s loving himself does not make him a self-loving person [臧之愛己，非為愛己之人也].” Alternatively, this might read: “Zang’s loving himself does not make him love his self’s humanity” or, as a referee has rendered more smoothly, “that Zang loves himself does not mean that he loves himself because he is a person.” This latter rendering would highlight the essential other-directedness of “loving people,” that the case of loving oneself, even though one is a person, does not count as loving people.

²² The text makes no effort to defend self-love, as Aristotle does in *Nicomachean Ethics* 9.8, where he suggests that while self-love as normally conceived (preservation of one’s own basic goods, like life) is rightly censured as selfish, self-love as properly conceived (doing virtuous actions, even at the cost of one’s own life) should be praised (for analysis, see Kim 2020, 2024a). I take it that the Mohists stick with a commonsensical notion of self-love because their vision of the good is rather bare (on this bareness, see Kim 2023).

²³ Whereas the loving people/robbers case involves a problem as to the relevant parties and not, as Fraser suggests, the action (see Footnote 8), I believe that the preserving/benefiting case involves a problem as to the action-type.

²⁴ Although I disagree with Lai’s apparent agreement with Fraser’s rendering of (P)—“In Mohism, one *always* loves a person, a Jack [i.e., Zang] and a Jill [i.e., Huo], for his or her own sake” (Lai 1993: 138, emphasis mine)—I think Lai nicely captures the tension: “Even in the exceptional case of Mohists approving the good that came from killing an innocent, the intention was never to harm the innocent, even though that might be the outcome. Mohists were forced to accept the good of the deed because the death of one saved the many” (Lai 1993: 138). This tortured dynamic of approving sacrifice of the innocent as good and bringing about this outcome and yet not intending it is similar to what I am gesturing at.

perhaps including those relating to governance, are nonmoral, and here it makes sense to include and exclude on the basis of usefulness and then treat those included as finally valuable. But in the moral, the objection goes, such a model does not apply. In the moral, the fact that someone is an end comes first and inclusion in certain basic benefits and protections just follows. Kant's idea of treating rational beings always as ends does not appear to be prefigured by a process in which we figure out, on the basis of benefit to the world, which rational beings are relevant and which are not. Or even in the Benthamite-Millian paradigm, where humanity's non-instrumental status at least appears to be more tenuous, "everybody [is] to count for one, nobody for more than one" (Mill 2001: 62). This is not a matter of figuring out which entities receptive to pleasure and pain are useful and which are harmful, and counting only the former as one apiece.

I believe that the Mohist response would be to question why there is this asymmetry between nonmoral and moral domains (they may very well question the distinction in the first place, especially in light of how much of what one might call "nonmoral" is stripped from their way of life). The extent to which a team is more important (in some sense), the more exclusive it tends to be. Specialist surgical teams save lives, pro bono law firms pursue justice, elite commando units undermine imperialist aspirations, and professional sports teams generate fortunes for local economies, to use some simplified examples, and all of these are highly exclusive. But more important than these teams is the team that they arguably subserve, the community at large, and the question that goes beyond the scope of this essay but that the Mohists might raise is why we should not be at least moderately exclusive when it comes to this team.

6 Conclusion

In sum, I have attempted to clarify the extent to which the later Mohist texts consider people as ends. As "Canons and Explanations" A7 suggests, humans are noninstrumentally valuable, unlike horses. But even if we take this noninstrumental value at face value and take the authors of "The Lesser Choosing" and "The Greater Choosing" to accept it, these authors do not take it as fundamental. The life and death of an individual is a matter of indifference unless it makes a difference to benefit to the world. Whether we value or disvalue an individual, to say nothing of *noninstrumentally* valuing that individual, depends on what kind of difference that individual adds to the world. It is only *after* this determination is made that we love and benefit the individual noninstrumentally. While the Mohists may have taken a step away from their contemporaries, like those influenced by Confucius, and toward Kant and Mill, by eliminating proximity to oneself as a determiner of human value (Loy 2013: 500; Wong 1989), the convergence is limited. There is no sense in Kant that in treating others as ends and not merely as means, that this comes after instrumental calculations have been made as to who these others are; and there is no sense in utilitarianism that who counts as "everybody" in "everybody to count for one, nobody for more than one" is conditional on the candidate's usefulness.

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