that justifications aside until a later chapter, instead skipping ahead a few generations to consider an important critical response to Confucius and the intellectual developments he sparked. Some of these developments resemble the pre-Socratic and Sophist contributions to Greek thought.

1. What role did the Yellow Emperor, the sage kings, and the early Zhou kings play in ancient Chinese thought? Are there people who played a similar role in ancient Greek thought? What about in modern thought?
2. In what ways were the Spring and Autumn Period and the Warring States Period socially and politically tumultuous? How does the turmoil during those periods compare to the social and political turmoil in Greece in the fifth century B.C.?
3. How did the dominant myths of ancient China differ from those of ancient Greece?

Mozi

Mozi, the man, is a mystery; we know remarkably little about him. He was probably born in Lu, one of the warring states in what is now Shandong province in China. He was probably born sometime between 500 B.C. and about 470 B.C., around the end of Confucius' lifetime, and probably survived until about the beginning of the fourth century B.C. (This makes him a contemporary of the Sophists and Socrates.) He may have been born to a lower-class family of artisans, but if so, he apparently rose to become a renowned military engineer and builder of fortifications, the well-educated founder of a flourishing philosophical school, and, for a time, a minister in the neighboring state of Song. His philosophy retains the indelible stamp of his engineering background: careful, methodical, rational, and practical. That philosophy is expounded in a book that, like many books in ancient China, was compiled over many generations but named after the famous philosopher on whose ideas it was based: the *Mozi*.

Among Mozi's philosophical innovations was the introduction of criteria by which to test the acceptability of a claim.

> Master Mo Zi* spoke, saying: "In general, it is not permissible, when making a statement, to fail to establish a standard first and [then] speak. If you do not establish a standard first and [then] speak, it is like using the upper part of a potter's revolving wheel and trying to establish the direction of the sunrise and sunset with it. I think that, although there is a distinction between the sunrise and the sunset, you will, in the end, certainly never be able to find it and establish it. This is why, for a statement, there are three criteria. What are the three criteria? I say there is examining it, there is determining its origin, and there is putting it to use. How do you examine it? You examine the affairs of the first sages and great kings. How do you determine its origin? You look at the evidence from the ears and eyes of the multitude. How do you put it to use? You set it out and use it in governing the state, considering its effect on the ten thousand people. These are called the 'three criteria.'" (*Mozi* 37.1)[1]

The idea here is that the "first sages and great kings" were wise men who knew how to conduct their affairs. The fact that they accepted a certain doctrine is therefore taken as evidence of its acceptability. That people can see and hear evidence for something themselves is further evidence of its acceptability. And finally, an acceptable doctrine, according to Mozi, will produce benefits if it is put into practice, whereas an unacceptable one will bring harm. There is some ambiguity in the *Mozi* about whether these standards are supposed to bring us closer to the *truth* or simply lead us to beneficial opinions. Standing as he does near the very beginning of the philosophical tradition in China, Mozi may not have been able to clearly distinguish between these possibilities. At any rate, the benefit that Mozi takes to justify a belief is not necessarily a benefit for the believer himself or herself, as it is for the Sophists, but for the society as a whole.

We can see these three criteria at work in Mozi's arguments for the existence of ghosts and spirits:

> Master Mo Zi spoke, saying: "Since the passing of the three sage kings of the Three Dynasties of

*The *zi* at the end of Mozi means "Master," making "Master Mo Zi" somewhat redundant. Many Chinese philosophers are known by such names, including Laozi, Zhuangzi, and Confucius, who is known in Chinese as Kongzi or "Master Kong." Mozi's full name was said to be Mo Di.

former times, the world has lost righteousness and the feudal lords use [military] force in governing [rather than virtue], so that those living now who are rulers and ministers, and superiors and inferiors, are without kindness or loyalty whilst fathers and sons, the younger and older brothers, are without compassion, filial conduct, respect, upright behavior and goodness. . . . Why have things come to this? It is because everyone is doubtful and suspicious on the question of whether ghosts and spirits exist or not, and do not clearly understand that ghosts and spirits are able to reward the worthy and punish the wicked. Now if all the people of the world could be brought to believe that ghosts and spirits are able to reward the worthy and punish the wicked, then how could the world be in disorder?" (*Mozi* 31.1)

Here we have Mozi bemoaning the chaotic and violent nature of his time and encouraging the belief in ghosts for the good consequences it would bring. He goes on to argue that

> in bringing up the method of how [the people of the world] examine and know whether something exists or not, we must certainly take the ears and eyes of the multitude to be a standard on the matter of existence and non-existence. If someone has genuinely heard something or seen something, then we must take it as existing. . . . If this is the case, why not put the matter to the test by going into a district or a village and asking about it? If, from ancient times to the present, since people came into existence, there have been those who have seen ghost-like or spirit-like things, or have heard ghost-like or spirit-like sounds, then how can ghosts and spirits be said to be non-existent? (*Mozi* 31.3)*

To counter the objection that many of these people may be untrustworthy, Mozi relates five cases of kings or dukes who encountered ghosts, often in the company of others. Finally, he alludes to the practices of the sage kings.

> Master Mo Zi said: "Suppose we accept that the evidence of the ears and eyes of the masses is not enough to trust and cannot be used to resolve doubt. Would we not accept that the sage kings of the Three Dynasties of former times—Yao, Shun, Yu, Tang, Wen and Wu—are enough to be taken as standards? . . .
>
> "When the sage kings bestowed their rewards, they invariably did so in the ancestral temple, and when they meted out [capital] punishment, they invariably did so at the altar of soil. Why did they bestow rewards in the ancestral temple? To announce [to the ghosts and spirits] that the apportionment was equitable. Why did they mete out [capital] punishment at the altar of soil? To announce [to the ghosts and spirits] that the judgment was fair. . . .
>
> "In ancient times, the sage kings certainly took ghosts and spirits to exist and their service to the ghosts and spirits was profound. But they also feared that their descendants of later generations would not be able to know this, so they wrote it on bamboo and silk to transmit it and hand it down to them. . . . What is the reason for this? It is because the sage kings took it to be important. . . . To oppose what the sage kings took to be fundamental cannot be regarded as the Way of the gentleman." (*Mozi* 31.9–31.11)

We can also see some of these same criteria at work in the *Mozi*'s arguments for the foundation of his ethical and political philosophy: the doctrine of impartial concern or **mutual care,** according to which the guiding principle of life is to care for everyone equally.* This is the most famous of Mozi's doctrines, in part because it conflicted with the traditional Chinese view that people would *and should* prioritize their own family, friends, and associates over strangers.

> Master Mo Zi spoke, saying: "The way in which the benevolent man conducts affairs must be to promote the world's benefit and eliminate the world's harm. It is in this way he conducts affairs." If this is so, then what is the world's benefit? What is the world's harm?
>
> Master Mo Zi said: "Now if states attack each other, if houses usurp each other, if people harm each other, if there is not kindness and loyalty between rulers and ministers, if there is not love and filiality between fathers and sons, if there is not concord and harmony between older and younger brothers, then this is harmful to the world."

*Compare to what Heraclitus says about "eyes and ears" on p. 21.

*Compare with Jesus' instruction to love "your neighbor as yourself." See pp. 256–258.

If this is so, then how can we not examine from what this harm arises? Does it not arise through mutual love?* Master Mo Zi spoke, saying: "It arises through *lack* of mutual love. Nowadays, feudal lords know only to love their own states and not to love the states of others, so they have no qualms about mobilizing their own state to attack another's state. Nowadays, heads of houses know only to love their own house and not to love the houses of others, so they have no qualms about promoting their own house and usurping another's house. Nowadays, individual people know only to love their own person and not to love the persons of others, so they have no qualms about promoting their own person and injuring the persons of others. For this reason, since the feudal lords do not love each other, there must inevitably be savage battles; since heads of houses do not love each other, there must inevitably be mutual usurpation; and, since individuals do not love each other, there must inevitably be mutual injury. Since rulers and ministers do not love each other, there is not kindness and loyalty; since fathers and sons do not love each other, there is not compassion and filial conduct; and, since older and younger brothers do not love each other, there is not harmony and accord. When the people of the world do not all love each other, then the strong inevitably dominate the weak, the many inevitably plunder the few, the rich inevitably despise the poor, the noble inevitably scorn the lowly, and the cunning inevitably deceive the foolish. Within the world, in all cases, the reason why calamity, usurpation, resentment and hatred arise is because mutual love does not exist, which is why those who are benevolent condemn this state of affairs."

Since they already condemn it, how can it be changed? Master Mo Zi spoke, saying: "It can be changed by the methods of universal mutual love and the exchange of mutual benefit." In this case, then, what are the methods of universal mutual love and exchange of mutual benefit? Master Mo Zi said: "People would view others' states as they view their own states. People would view others' houses as they view their own houses. People would view other people as they view themselves. . . . If the people of the world all loved each other, the strong would not dominate the weak, the many would not plunder the few, the rich would not despise the poor, the noble would not scorn the lowly, and the cunning would not deceive the foolish. Within the world, in all cases, there would be nothing to cause calamity, usurpation, resentment and hatred to arise because of the existence of mutual love. This is why those who are benevolent praise it." (*Mozi* 15.1–15.3)

Here we have Mozi arguing for his doctrine of mutual care by pointing out the good consequences of people's practicing it and the bad consequences of people's rejecting it. Again, Mozi bemoans the state of society and prescribes a solution. (His insistence that people should be taught to believe in ghosts seems to have been, in part, a way of encouraging people to put the difficult doctrine of mutual care into practice.)

Mozi then turns to consider some objections to his solution, including the claim that

> "If it [love] were universal, it would be good. However, this is something that cannot be done. It is comparable to lifting up [Mount Tai] and jumping over the Yellow River and the Qi Waters." Master Mo Zi said: "That is not a valid comparison. Lifting up [Mount Tai] and jumping over the Yellow River could be said to be a feat of extraordinary strength. From ancient times to the present, no-one has been able to do this. By comparison, universal mutual love and exchange of mutual benefit are quite different from this. The sage kings of ancient times practiced these things." (*Mozi* 15.8)

This last claim would surely have surprised many of Mozi's contemporaries, who took the sage kings' behavior as evidence for the rightness of prioritizing one's friends and family over strangers. Nonetheless, Mozi goes on to support his claim about the sage kings by listing the ways in which Emperor Yu, King Wen, and King Wu practiced mutual care through their diligent efforts to bring benefits to their people, concluding that

> if [officers and gentlemen] wish the world to be well ordered and abhor its disorder, [they] should

*The translator uses the term "mutual love" instead of "mutual care." Other translators have used the term "universal love" as well. This can be misleading because Mozi's concern is with how we *treat* one another, not with the emotions we feel toward one another; he is encouraging us to *care for* everyone equally, even if we do not *care about* everyone equally. It may not be possible to love everyone (in an emotional sense) in the way you love your own family, but that doesn't mean it's impossible to behave impartially.

> take as right universal mutual love and exchange of mutual benefit. These were the methods of the sage kings and the Way of order for the world, so it is impossible that they not be assiduously pursued. (*Mozi* 15.10)

Here we have Mozi applying the first criterion, which is examining the "affairs of the first sages and great kings." Thus, even in advocating for a radical revision in Chinese social practices, Mozi paints his proposals as in step with the practices of the great kings of old.

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1. What three criteria does Mozi propose for determining the acceptability of a claim? What do you think of those criteria?
2. How does Mozi argue for the existence of ghosts? How do his arguments relate to his three criteria?
3. What is Mozi's doctrine of mutual care? What arguments does he give for it?

The School of Names

Whereas Mozi is famous for the practicality of his philosophical interests, other ancient Chinese philosophers are notorious for the supposed frivolity of their arguments. They delight in logical paradoxes, in drawing subtle distinctions, in using convoluted arguments to prove the opposite of whatever anyone else believed (which they called **"making the inadmissible admissible"**), and in pursuing what their contemporaries saw as pointless word games with the names of things. Because of this last tendency, later scholars would group these disparate thinkers together as the **School of Names.** They are often compared to the Sophists of ancient Greece, but in many ways, they are closer to the Eleatics like Parmenides and Zeno.* Just as the Eleatics pushed the limits of early Greek logic to explore key themes in Greek philosophy, such as appearance and reality, the philosophers of the School of Names explored key themes in early Chinese philosophy, such as sameness and difference.

The Eleatic tendencies of the School of Names appear most clearly in Hui Shi, whose life remains even more mysterious than Mozi's. He lived during the fourth century B.C. and is often described as a statesman, sometimes as talented and sometimes not. One account even depicts him as an expert in the sort of protoscience that motivated the Eleatics. He is best known, however, for a set of cryptic and sometimes paradoxical aphorisms known as the **Ten Theses:**

> The largest thing has nothing beyond it; it is called the One of largeness. The smallest thing has nothing within it; it is called the One of smallness.
>
> That which has no thickness cannot be piled up; yet it is a thousand *li* [about three hundred miles] in dimension.
>
> Heaven is as low as the earth; mountains and marshes are on the same level.
>
> The sun at noon is the sun setting. The thing born is the thing dying.
>
> Great similarities are different from little similarities; these are called the little similarities and differences. The ten thousand things all are similar and all are different; these are called the great similarities and differences.
>
> The southern region has no limit and yet has a limit.
>
> I set off for Yue today and came there yesterday.
>
> Linked rings can be separated.
>
> I know the center of the world: it is north of Yan [in the north] and south of Yue [in the south].
>
> Let love embrace the ten thousand things; Heaven and earth are a single body. (*Zhuangzi* 33)[2]

Although the original explanations of and arguments for these aphorisms have been lost, we can see several themes that we have already encountered among the pre-Socratics, such as the relativity of perspective and an interest in infinitely large and infinitesimally small measures of space or time. From today's perspective, a journey to Yue occurs today, but from tomorrow's perspective,

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*The thinker who most resembles the Sophists was a contemporary of Confucius and early forerunner of the School of Names called Deng Xi. It is said that he would, for a fee, argue either side of any case—and sometimes both sides—and, by twisting the letter of the law, prove whichever side he was hired to argue. According to legend, a frustrated ruler eventually executed him, thereby restoring peace and order to his land.

it occurred yesterday. A line consists of infinitesimally thin points that have no thickness, but it can stretch over great distances. The world (allegedly) being infinitely large, anywhere that you can stand has the same (infinite) amount of space in all directions; everywhere is the center of the world. At the exact moment when the sun reaches its zenith, it is already beginning to decline. Elsewhere, Hui Shi even offers some paradoxes that seem to echo Zeno's paradoxes of motion:*

> No matter how swift the barbed arrow, there are times when it is neither moving nor at rest. . . .
>
> Take a pole one foot long, cut away half of it every day, and at the end of ten thousand generations, there will still be some left. (*Zhuangzi* 33)

Whereas we only know of Hui Shi's thought from others' brief reports, we have some complete writings from the other leading figure of the School of Names, Gongsun Long (c. 320–250 B.C.). Gongsun is most famous for a maddeningly cryptic dialogue about the classical problem of **"hardness and whiteness."** In ancient Chinese philosophy, the phrase "hardness and whiteness" stands for conceptually distinct but physically overlapping qualities or properties of an object, such as the hardness and whiteness of a white stone; you can *think* about the stone's color and firmness as distinct aspects of the stone, but you cannot remove one from the stone while leaving the other.

In the dialogue, Gongsun draws on this idea to argue that "a white horse is not a horse." While there are as many interpretations of this dialogue as there are interpreters, many interpretations take Gongsun to be intentionally twisting the meaning of phrases to "make the inadmissible admissible." His goal, on these interpretations, is not really to convince anyone that a white horse is not a horse, but to perplex, dazzle, and amuse his listeners with his cleverness. At the beginning of the dialogue, for instance, Gongsun argues as follows.

A. Is it correct to say that a white horse is not a horse?
B. It is.
A. Why?
B. Because "horse" denotes the form and "white" denotes the color. What denotes the color does not denote the form. Therefore we say that a white horse is not a horse.
A. There being a horse, one cannot say that there is no horse. If one cannot say that there is no horse, then isn't [it] a horse? Since there being a white horse means that there is a horse, why does being white make it not a horse?
B. Ask for a horse, and either a yellow or a black one may answer. Ask for a white horse, and neither the yellow horse nor the black one may answer. If a white horse were a horse, then what is asked in both cases would be the same. If what is asked is the same, then a white horse would be no different from a horse. If what is asked is no different, then why is it that yellow and black horses may yet answer in the one case but not in the other? Clearly the two cases are incompatible. Now the yellow horse and the black horse remain the same. And yet they answer to a horse but not to a white horse. Obviously a white horse is not a horse. . . . ("On the White Horse")[3]

While it is obvious that Gongsun's conclusion is false, it is not always obvious exactly how his argument has gone astray. And for every objection that his partner raises, Gongsun has a ready and witty reply. After many more iterations of this sort, one can imagine a frustrated courtier throwing up his hands, pointing at a horse, and shouting, "That thing! Right there! I don't care what you call it, just give it to me! I want to go riding!"

Neither Gongsun Long nor Hui Shi, nor any of the other members of the School of Names, is known to have explicitly endorsed relativism or skepticism. Instead, they used their newfound powers of reasoning to defend seemingly inadmissible claims. In this way they are more like the Eleatics than the Sophists. But their eagerness to "make the inadmissible admissible" and their facility in doing so instills exactly the kind of doubts about knowledge that the Sophists sowed in ancient Athens.

* See p. 27.

1. Pick one of Hui Shi's ten theses. What do you think it means?
2. How do you interpret Gongsun Long's argument that "a white horse is not a horse"?
3. How are the philosophers of the School of Names like the Eleatics in ancient Greek philosophy? How are they like the Sophists?

The Later Mohists

Confronted with the sophistry of the School of Names, Mozi's later followers set about the hard work of transforming logic from a source of paradoxes into a source of knowledge. Over the course of two centuries or so, these followers, known as **Mohists,** developed sophisticated views about a range of philosophical topics, including logic, metaphysics, epistemology, philosophy of language, and ethics. In doing so, they explicitly address many of the logical issues raised by the School of Names, such as sameness and difference, "hard and white," the endless and dimensionless, and the relation of names to objects. They also explored a range of other topics, including geometry, optics, engineering, and economics. The later sections of the *Mozi* record their work on all of these topics, sometimes in cryptic formulations. We will focus here on their development of logic.

In contrast to the School of Names, the Mohists explicitly reject the idea that a statement and its denial can both be admissible.

> The other is not admissible; two are not admissible. . . . Everything is either "ox" or "not-ox." It is like a hinge. There are two—there is no way to deny (this).
>
> Disputation is contending about "that" (the other). Winning in disputation depends on validity. . . . One says it is "ox," one says it is "not-ox"; this is contending about "that" (the other). In this case, both are not valid. Where both are not valid, of necessity, one is not valid. . . . (*Mozi* Canons & Explanations A74–75)

The first part of this passage says that a particular thing is either an ox or not an ox. It must be one or the other and it cannot be both an ox and a non-ox. The second part of the passage explains that in an argument, the winner is the one who gets the right answer; in an argument about whether some creature is an ox, it cannot be that both sides are correct. Thus, these passages express two central principles of logic, which Aristotle articulated at roughly the same time in Greece: the law of non-contradiction, which says that a statement and its denial cannot both be true, and the law of excluded middle, which says that either a statement or its denial is true.

Given that the "admissible" cannot also be "inadmissible," the Mohists concluded that Hui Shi's and Gongsun Long's paradoxical reasoning must contain mistakes. But it is easier to see *that* such reasoning is mistaken than to say exactly *how* it is mistaken. The Mohists set about explaining away such sophistry by aiming for ever greater logical precision in their concepts and definitions. For instance, they note that

> A beginning is a specific instant of time. . . . Time in some cases has duration and in some cases does not. A beginning is a specific instant of time without duration. (*Mozi* Canons & Explanations A44)

This careful definition of a beginning seems aimed at dispelling some of Hui Shi's paradoxes, such as the claim that the sun is simultaneously at its zenith and declining or that an arrow is simultaneously moving and at rest. Other Mohist claims seem similarly aimed at specific paradoxes associated with the School of Names. Those paradoxes, then, arose not from being too clever about logic, but from not being clever enough. Used correctly, the Mohists believed, logic could be a powerful tool for distinguishing true from false and right from wrong.

> Disputation is about making clear the distinction between right and wrong (true and false), and investigating the pattern of order and disorder. It is about clarifying instances of sameness and difference, examining the principles of name and entity, determining what is beneficial and harmful, and resolving what is doubtful and uncertain. With it, there is enquiry and investigation into how the ten thousand things are; there is discussion and analysis of the kinds of the many words. Names are the means of "picking out" entities; words are the means of expressing concepts; explanations are the means of bringing out causes. Through kinds (classes) choices are made; through kinds (classes) inferences are drawn. (*Mozi* Choosing the Lesser 45.1)

Picking out the correct entities and drawing correct inferences requires following acceptable patterns of reasoning and avoiding unacceptable ones.

> With respect to things (the following apply):
> Sometimes a thing is so if it is this.
> Sometimes a thing is not so if it is this.
> Sometimes a thing is so if it is not this.
> Sometimes a thing is general (in one case) but is not general (in another case).
> Sometimes a thing is so (in one case) but not so (in another case). (*Mozi* Choosing the Lesser 45.4)

These principles sound odd to us, but they relate to typical forms of disputation in which one argues that because a thing *x* is *y* and because something is true of *x* it must also be true of *y*. The *Mozi* points out that principles of reasoning like this are sometimes correct, but other times are not:

> 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. *Huo* is a person. To love *Huo* is to love a person. *Zang* is a person. To love *Zang* is to love a person. These are examples of there being this and it is so. (*Mozi* Choosing the Lesser 45.5)

These examples illustrate the first principle in the list above. Because a particular entity—such as this white horse or this person—is of a particular kind, an action performed with that particular entity is an action performed with an entity of that particular kind. The obvious target here is Gongsun Long's infamous claim that a white horse is not a horse.

> Huo's parents are people. Huo's serving his parents is not serving people. His younger brother is a beautiful person. Loving a younger brother is not loving a beautiful person. A cart is wood. Riding a cart is not riding wood. A boat is wood. Boarding a boat is not boarding wood. A robber is a person. . . . Not being a robber isn't not being a person. How can this be made clear? . . . To wish there were no robbers is not to wish there were no people. (*Mozi* Choosing the Lesser 45.6)

The examples given here illustrate the second principle in the list above, which warns against various mistaken inferences that *appear* similar to the acceptable inferences endorsed by the first principle. For instance, although the name "people" applies to Huo's parents, we cannot infer from the fact that Huo loves his parents *as parents* that he loves them *as people*. Although a robber is a person, we cannot infer that someone who dislikes robbers or wishes there were no robbers dislikes people per se or wishes there were no people.

Other passages illustrate the third, fourth, and fifth principles, further distinguishing between patterns of interpretations or inference that differ in acceptability despite being grammatically similar. For instance, from the fact that an ox has yellow hairs, we may infer that it is a yellow ox; but from the fact that the ox has many hairs, we cannot infer that it is many oxen.

If the Mohists used their disagreements with the School of Names to sharpen their logical skills, they mainly deployed those skills against their primary philosophical rivals at the time, the Confucians. Much of the *Mozi* consists of detailed arguments for their own moral and political views as opposed to the Confucians'. They regarded argumentation and rational criticism as the primary means of demonstrating that their views were true and the Confucians' views were false. For much of the golden age of classical Chinese philosophy, it seems that their criticisms were taken seriously. Indeed, Mohism seems to have been the main competitor to Confucianism during this period. After the reunification of China in 221 B.C., however, Confucianism decisively eclipsed Mohism, which faded into obscurity.

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1. How might the Mohists use the claim about starting points having no duration to refute some of Hui Shi's paradoxical claims?
2. How do the examples given above illustrate the Mohists' five principles of argumentation?
3. How does the Mohists' use of reasoning differ from that of the School of Names?

Zhuangzi

Whereas the Mohists responded to the School of Names by trying to set logic on a firmer foundation, another philosopher, Zhuangzi, responded very differently. He turned reason against itself,