

# The Way of Mankind's Existence and Development in Mohist Perspective

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## Abstract

Mohism plays an important role in resolving the problems which today's mankind are faced with in their existence and development. Mohist theory of universal love is the significant guidance of dealing with the interpersonal relationships; Mohist thought of moderation in use is a vital caution to the scientific development of current society. That Mohism emphasizes the spirit of logic and reason is the necessary guarantee of developing wholesome perfected personality. So, we need seriously introspection and then take struggling action to avoid lots of irrational behaviors that emerge in reality.

**Keywords:** Universal Love; Moderation in Use; Logic and Reason

There are many conflicts lie in human beings society, then, incompatible and disharmony phenomena between people and people, people and society, social group and social group, which are more and more violent. In order to solve these problems, people invent all kinds of science and technology, however, it also leads to some terrible results: pollution is more and more serious, all kinds of disasters emerge in an endless stream, the nature is destructed and human beings has been trapped more deeply in dilemma. Mohism is a distinguished school in pre-Qin of China. Though it had been buried for a long time, Mohism has initially manifested the function, and will play a

directional and important role to the future development of China and world.

## 1. Ideal and Harmonious Society Must Depend on Universal Love

Separated individuals cannot sustainably exist, so we need other people to help us. Naturally, the problem about how to deal well with the interpersonal relationship arises. Maybe someone would have a question that how we understand the relationship between nation and nation, group and group, etc. They are all the collective conception of people from the view of nature; the relationship between nation and nation, group and group is reproduction of the interpersonal relationships with certain complexity.

Karl Marx said that people is the sum of social relationships from the class nature of human view. Thinkers have always been thinking about how to deal with the interpersonal relationships in society. But we have not got the best way to solve this problem. The history of warfare during thousands years, especially the World War I (killed 8.465 million people) and the World War II (killed 5.7 million people) happened in the first half of 20<sup>th</sup> century, has fully indicated that human is disharmonious, contradiction and countermeasure. So, up to now, human cannot fundamentally deal well with the relationship between self and others.<sup>[1]</sup>

Mohist doctrine of "universal love" is a better way to deal with the interpersonal relationships. Universal love means

equally love and care each other, especially emphasizes on treating other country as our country, treating other people as myself. "People would view others' states as they view their own states. People would view others' houses as they view their houses. People would view other as they view themselves. "

(*Universal Love II*) Universal love is both necessary and sufficient conditions to achieve the national long period of stability and peace.<sup>[2]</sup>

Lao Zi emphasized that thought should be free, and took against constraint and rules; Confucianism stressed the strictly rank order between man and man, and then the mankind's relationship falls into a seriously ossified, illiberality and lost individual freedom's "alienation" state. Mohism criticizes the idea of Confucians that there is an hierarchical system based on "in treating relatives as relatives, there are gradations", and "the differentiation of love", and brought up their idea that the well interpersonal relationship should be consist of "respect" and "rule" of the low to the high, and "love" and "admonition" of the high to the low. Mohism thought this would assure that interpersonal relationship is harmony and unblocked, it also guarantee the team performance and the long period of stability of social groups and countries.

Although there is no particularly cruel war in recent years in our world, battles always arise, conflicts and hatred between country and country, nation and nation, do not weaken radically, there are lots of fights for owns economic interests, various forms of terrorism, tension and continuous military exercises, economic and military competition are more and more fierce, and nuclear deterrence and power politics made whole world fall into more and more terror. Meanwhile, the gap between rich and poor is growing more and more serious, so is inequality; political and academic corruption, twisted

mind phenomenon let the freedom will of human increasingly lose its proper personality. People today live in a rather disharmonious society.

Harmony society and world demand seeking common ground while reserving differences to resolve contradictions, not a life-or-death struggle between country and country. Because on the one hand, your death is not sure to result in my survival; on the other hand, your death would necessarily product new *you* whose death could not be determined by you. The relationships between man and man, group and group, are also you-me coexist, you-me win-win situation, and harmonious society development. Harmony society is not the elimination of aliens, but the fully containment and common development and improvement.

To realize harmonious interpersonal relationship, the key is to deal well with the relationship between the strong and the weak, the rich and the poor, the high and the low. "So the feudal lords would love each other and then there would not be savage battles. Heads of houses would love each other and then there would not be mutual usurpation. Individual people would love each other and then they would not injure each other. Rulers and ministers would love each other and then there would be kindness and loyalty. Fathers and sons would love each other and then there would be compassion and filial conduct. Elder and younger brothers would love each other and then there would be harmony and accord. If the people of the world all loved each other, the strong would not dominate the weak, the majority would not plunder the minority, the rich would not despise the poor, the noble would not scorn the low, 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.” (*Universal Love II*) It is easily for the strong to reproach and oppress the weak, which is often in terms of angry, even tricky.<sup>[3]</sup> Of course, in an extreme disharmony society, there are many contrast phenomena. So, Mo Zi stressed that the low should *respect* the high, and the high should *love* the low.

In conclusions, the theory of Mohist universal love and harmony indicates basic frame construction to realize the harmony society, it is also the important direction of dealing with the interpersonal relationships in future civilization.

## **2. Scientific Development Must Depend on Moderation in Use**

Human being is the top of animals, and everything should be used by human. Mohism seems to be fully realizing this. So, Mohism stress that “There is enquiry and investigation into what and why everything is,” (*Choosing the Lesser*) means that man must research the nature and the law of everything.

Mohist scholars are good at applying science and technology, and research and sum up certain scientific theories. Mohist Canons, written by Mohist scholars, is an “encyclopedia” book containing many disciplines knowledge, such as optics, mechanics, mathematics, logic, etc. For example, the famous principle of “Pinhole imaging” is correctly and scientifically expressed by the book.

From the viewpoint of Mohism, the basic purpose of science and technology is to serve for people, and scientific discoveries and inventions are valuable if and only if they are useful and beneficial for mankind. Mo Zi said, science and technology is that “if it beneficial for man, it is called artful thing, if it is harmful for man, it is called awkward thing,” (*Lu’s Questions*) the function of science and technology must be beneficial for

mankind. Mohist scientific spirit is concordant with humanistic spirit, and science and technology should serve for development of people and mankind co-exist with nature in harmony. In view of this, even the invention of science and technology seems to be very wonderful, but if its harms to human are greater than benefits, it is not desirable.

Today, many contemporary inventions and discoveries of science and technology maybe be no beneficial to mankind, and even be catastrophic to mankind, such as atomic weapons, chemical weapons, and nuclear missile, etc. But why are we engaged in studying and producing these weapons in quantities?

In modern times, people’s material and cultural living standards made earth-shaking changes than the previous era, because science and technology continue to be applied effectively to the people’s production and life. While human life has made great progress, but their happiness and health have no great progress.<sup>[4]</sup> In contrast, mankind faces more and more disease and ailment, decayed mortality, the various diseases as a result of obesity, over-nutrition, and three high foods. With human material life becomes more and more rich, many kinds of unnecessary waste phenomena are surprising; excessive and unnecessary consumption has increasingly become a common phenomenon and habitual behavior in people’s lives. In fact, natural resources are very limited, not endless. If human have no any control to grab natural resources, eventually we would get the nature’s revenge. Earthquake, tsunami, typhoon, hurricane, plague and all kinds of natural disasters are more and more common, water pollution, air pollution<sup>[5]</sup> and environmental pollution become more and more serious, the earth is gradually becoming worse place for mankind to survive.

In Mo Zi's times, mankind grabbed natural resource less than modern times, and environment is much better than today, but Mohism recognized ahead of times the importance of practicing strictly economy and combating waste, raised the opinion that mankind must be abided by the principles of "Moderation in use", "Moderation in funerals", and argued against unreasonably practices, such as extravagance and waste, excessive consumption and unrestrained enjoyment, etc. What is the meaning of "Moderation in use" ? Mo Zi said, "When a sage governs, in issuing edicts and promoting affairs, in employing the people and using materials, he does nothing that is not useful. For this reason, the use of resources is without waste, the people are not overburdened, and the increase in benefit is considerable." (*Moderation in Use I*) If rulers have a plan to do something, and must be with a view to be able to be beneficial and practical, while could not waste more human resources, financial and material resources. In today's China, the waste of official cars consumption is surprise; one important reason of much traffic jams is some unnecessary blocking traffic. On official money consumption aspects, the waste is also surprise; one important factor of sub-healthy is excessive official eating and drinking. Some people hold the view that what Mohism advocates "Moderation in use" is to require people to live a poor live; "Moderation in funerals" seems to lost fundamental respect to the dead; "Condemning music " means that people need no musical enjoyment. In fact, what Mohism objects to only is waste and excessively consumption; is unnecessary rites for funeral which stopped the normal production activity; is plenty of wastes of manpower and material resources for too much entertainment.

We propose to establish an outlook on scientific development, namely the development must be sustainable, while not excessively using natural resources for economic benefits, causing the nature non-renewable. Scientific outlook on development is inseparable from constructing a conservation-oriented society, the outlook demands us to have a conception of conservation and thrift, and establish a truly sustainable development of economical society.

### 3. Wholesome Perfected Personality Must Depend on Logic and Reason

Whenever they are dealing with interpersonal relations, or dealing with the relationship between human and object, they must be rational and have logical and reason spirit. Mo Zi knows it.

Dialectic is the foundation of Mohism. Mo Zi emphasized that students should be "discriminating in discussion "

(*Exalting Worthiness I*) , Mo Zi also emphasized that students should foster and improve their quality and ability of logical thinking, and required every student should become an excellent scholar who could dispute names and entities, distinguish true and false, and be equipped with perfect reasoning and arguing ability, which was highlighted in ancient Chinese education thought.

Dialectic plays an important role in Mohism, and argumentation of Mohism makes it be full of strong critical spirit. Among of *Mohist doctrines*, there are some articles, such as "Against fate", "Condemning music", "Against the Confucians", "Condemning offensive warfare", and etc. criticize some negative ideas from Confucianism and other schools. Although Mo Zi was the student of Confucianism, he disliked the thought that an extravagant funeral brought the poverty. Hence, he started to encourage the political way of Xia Dynasty rather

than Zhou Dynasty. In order to compete with Confucianism thought, Mo Zi had to take up their critical arms---- Dialectics, namely, Logic founded by Mohism. [6] Mohism used “Dialectic” to criticize and inherit predecessors’ thoughts and study seriously theoretical and practical knowledge, constructed Mohist thought system that was regarded as “famous school” at that time and then became an important characteristic origin of Chinese traditional thought.

In pre-Qin times of China, all schools of thoughts contend for attention, and logical thinking and analytical reasoning were fully developed. After Qin and Han dynasty, because rulers took the policy of stifling thought and proscribing all non-Confucian schools of thought, Chinese were short of logical thinking and scientific reasoning until “the May 4th Movement of 1919”, Chinese scholars claimed “Sir Logic” after “Sir Democracy” and “Sir Science”, logical thinking and scientific reasoning were paid some attention. But until today, logical thinking and scientific reasoning do not get great attention in China.

In traditional Chinese society, people concentrated on offering and believing propositions, and ignored seriously to discuss these propositions. Hence, people always were blindness. For example, Chinese tend to think that man should be kind, and say, “Give cake and ale to perfect soul,” but opposite proverb is that “Good man could not live long”, it seems that we should not do good deed. Chinese insist that money is not important, and say, “Money like dirt, while righteousness is precious”, but opposite idea is “Human beings die in pursuit of wealth, and birds die in pursuit of food.” which indicates that money is very important. These proverbs are contradictory to each other, but a large number of them are believed without any doubt. As a result, many people would

not distinguish right and wrong, and be unable to achieve their interests in one way or another.

Wise talent needs the ability and quality of logical thinking. In today’s society, intellectual, management and official would like to do their work perfectly, they are required to have the ability of strong logical thinking. For example, if official have some ability and quality of logical thinking, they would perfectly do their works, and be careful not to corrupt. For example, if one official has good logical thinking, he would infer that accepting others property must eventually comes out from the common sense “there is no free lunch”. In fact, many corrupt officials have lost their basic ability of logical thinking and moral conscience. It is said that the fly does not bite the seamless egg, for corrupt official, their loophole is that they don’t have a good thinking.

Air pollution is a very serious problem in today’s China. Why is there so much air pollution? How to harness? According to investigation, the main reasons are: vehicle emissions, coal, dust, etc. In fact, people have already realized the problem of air pollution, but in order to make achieve fast economic development and high growth of GDP, to have excessive enjoyment and consumption, people forget we should harness the root of air pollution. As we all known, nowadays contained air pollution, water pollution, solid waste, and soil pollution, etc., these kinds of pollution are serious. If we do not pay more attention to prevent and control pollution until it becomes extremely serious, we would have to pay higher cost to avoid it.

In this time, we emphasize human rational spirit. Hence, we should pay more attention to cultivate wise talent, especially to promote human’s quality and ability of logical thinking. For Mohism takes rational thinking and the

spirit of logical argument seriously, Mohist theory deserves attention and is truly to carry forward.

#### 4. Conclusion

Mohism fundamentally takes on a scientific theoretical system, whose starting point is its dialectic, whose core is the principle of universal love, and whose characteristic is the combination of scientific spirit and humanistic spirit. Mohism plays an important role in constructing harmony society, coming sustainable development true and etc.

Firstly, Mohist theory of universal love points out the direction of mankind's peaceful relationship. Individuals cannot live without others, and how to get along with others is a question that everyone must answer. Ever since the dawn of history, as a whole, mankind is not able to deal well with the relationship between self and others. In order to resolve this problem, thinkers advocated various solution ways. Among of them, Mohist universal love is one of the best ways. Especially, universal love could decrease much social disharmonious phenomenon, such as serious power corruption, academic corruption, extreme inequality, bullying, etc.

Secondly, Mohist thought of moderation in use and rational consumption is the important caution of the scientific development of society. Human could be able to know everything and study scientifically using given knowledge, thereby human could practice better and satisfy their wants. However, today, when people dispose of objects, we tend to put mankind at the first place and science and technology must serve for mankind. Many scientific and technological inventions, such as nuclear weapons, are not beneficial to existence and development of mankind, even instead of becoming a driving force of

human suicide, such as the emergence of a variety of strange disease, aggravation of pollution, and frequent natural disasters, etc. Fundamentally, only being fully in accordance with requirements of Mohist moderation in use, we would have a hope to survive.

Finally, Mohism pays more attention to the cultivation of logical rational ability, and considers it as the basic way to resolve any difficulty that human are facing. The nature of human is morality and virtual, but reason is the most basic ability of human. What exists without reason is the same animal, even not as good as some animals. And because of lacking reason, moral behaviors could not sustain. Current social problems attribute basically to lacking reason of human. Hence, we must fully expand Mohist rational spirit which is full of logical argumentation to resolve some problems we are facing with.

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