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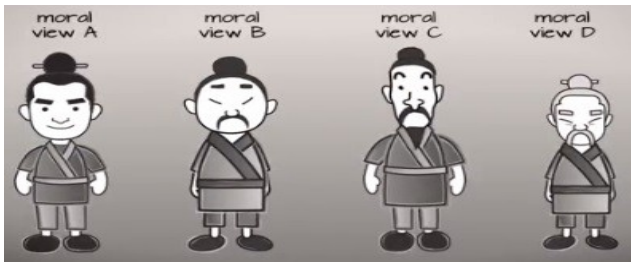
3.11 Mozi's political theory

Despite being a **utilitarian**, Mozi agrees with Confucius, not the West, in psychology and sociology.

	Mozi agrees with Confucius	**Mozi differs with Confucius**
Human psychology and sociology	Human beings are primarily **social** creatures, not selfish. Humans are naturally organized in **hierarchies** of merit, with named roles and ritualized role behavior. The scheme guides our **cooperative** performance. We all follow a **single shared social dao**.	For Confucius, the concern for 利lì benefit is natural but empathy may not be. For Mozi, 天nature desires empathy and ordinary people can come to have empathy by the natural process of emulation.
Normative theory	Both Confucius and Mozi treat roles and conventions as the focal point of normative theory and sees the goal of a social dao as concerted, harmonious social performance.	Mozi would **reform** traditions and and rituals whenever we find ways to make the performance result be greater material benefit for all.
Metaethics	Both give 天(nature) *some* normative role. but disagree on what it is. Confucius limits it to delivering a ruler. Mozi thinks it gives us a normative standard, but leaves the selection, using the standard, to the social world (天下 tian-xia).	Mozi and Confucius disagree fundamentally on the source of **norm legitimacy**. Confucius traces it through history to the **sage kings.** Mozi traces it to a bias in natural processes which he reads as 天 **tian's** favoring human well-being.

Mozi's political theory
Mozi's chapter entitled "Identification with the Superior" is a theory of the origin and the justification of rulers and social hierarchies. Just as Mozi's utilitarianism anticipated 18th century Western utilitarianism, so his political theory anticipated Thomas Hobbes' 17th century social contract theory—both with striking differences. Like Hobbes, Mozi starts with what we refer to as "a state of nature" – a kind of historical "prior" state which motivates political structures. Hobbes' motivates choosing a king, making laws and punishing people. Mozi's motivates leaders in the project of devising a social *dào* that guides cooperation.

古者民始生，未有刑政之時，蓋其語『人異義』。
是以一人則一義，二人則二義，十人則十義，
其人茲眾，其所謂義者亦茲眾。是以人是其義，
以非 人之義，故文相非也。是以內者父子兄弟作怨惡，
離散不能相和合。天下之百姓，皆以水火毒藥相虧害，
至有餘力不能以相勞，腐臭1餘財不以相分，
隱匿良道不以相教，天下之亂，若禽獸然。



When the people began, before punishing and governing, it was "everybody has a different morality." One had one morality. Two had two moralities, and ten had ten moralities. The more people, the more moralities. People chose their own and rejected others'. Moral disgust even split father and son,older and younger brothers. They scattered and did not unify, harmed each other with fire, water and poison, wasted energy and let things rot without sharing, hid beneficial daos from each other. The social world was as disorderly as wild animals.
(Book 3: I: 1,i)

Notice that, unlike Hobbes, Mozi' does not start with our selfish desires. Mozi's sees the inefficient state, war and violence, as arising from different moralities (義 **yì)**, not conflicts of self-interest. It justifies constructing a common social dao, unifying morality..

Mozi's "state of nature" picture thus provides him with the basis for his political theory:
To escape this state of disorder, 天下 **tiān xià** (social world) selects the **wisest** and **best** among us to be the "natural master" (天子 **tianzi**) to lead the project of unifying everyone's morality. While this sounds somewhat democratic, there is no mention of any voting mechanism and the leader is qualified by his wisdom and goodness, not our consent or agreement. However his role, as we will see, is not that of a moral authority, to ***declare*** what is moral, but that of a social leader, to guide a process of collecting and unifying moralities.