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3.12 Political hierarchy and consultation

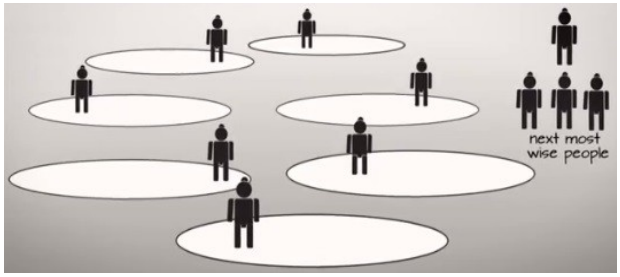
So how is the 天子 **tiān zǐ** (natural master) going to harmonize and unify all of the moralities?

Mozi's idea is that the 天子 **tiān zǐ** (natural master) is going to do this by way of something like a public consultation. The people's views will be solicited and passed up through to the government. In this way, the ruler will know what is good for everybody, and can put in place a social dao for everyone's benefit.

Here's how Mozi sees this happening:

1. The first step for the ruler acknowledges he cannot declare what is moral for everyone, so he selects wise and good men as ministers. They in turn select regional leaders in each region who similarly select the next official layer in the social hierarchy.

天子立，以其力為未足，又選擇天下之賢可者，置立之以為三公。天子三公既以立，以天 下為博大，遠國異土之民，是非利害之辯，不可一二而明知，故畫分萬國，立諸侯國君，諸侯國君既已立，以其力為未足，又選擇其國之賢可者，置立之以為正長。



Feeling the insufficiency of his capacity, the master chose the wise and able in the social world, installed them as three dukes. The master and three dukes in place, seeing the complexity of the social world, the far off state with different peoples, could not simply Have one or two conceptions of right vs wrong, benefit vs. harm. So they divided 10,000 smaller states with rulers. These state rulers and nobles, seeing their own insufficiency, selected the states' wise and able as rectifying elders.
(Mozi: Book 3: I: 2)

2. Then the 天子 **tiān zǐ** (natural master) will issue a directive to the people telling them to report everything they know about what is good or bad, what is beneficial and harmful, to their superior. If a person knows of a way of raising more grain he must report that; if he knows that a pest is coming, he must report that too. If someone is cooperative or disorderly, report that as well.

3. Then step three: each official or lord or minister will synthesize the reports he receives to pass the information on up. Here Mozi is frustratingly vague about what each level in the reporting does with these reports. He doesn't give us any mechanism or any theory of how to synthesize them. They just somehow prepare a single report which each then sends on up the bureaucratic ladder to the 天子 **tiān zǐ** (natural master). The 天子 **tiān zǐ** (natural master) will then use these reports to construct the common shared morality that will form the basis for judging things as morally 是非 shì-fei (this, not-that) which everyone agrees to follow.

Mozi looks to us like an **authoritarian** in a way: Once a social dao is in place (through this consultative process), then **we are all to follow it.** However, Mozi's purpose is still to **benefit everyone**, and the dao is constructed from each person's judgement of what works for him. Given the vagueness about how the reports are harmonized, the shared morality may be one of maximum tolerance for many different ways of life, as long as they do not lead to conflict, enmity, coercion or war. Most commentators, however, assume the 是非 shìfei judgments extend right down to which shoe to tie first.

So Mozi is a **naturalist** (in taking the highest, objective standard from 天 **tian**) and also a **humanist** (taking morality to be a human social construction), and proposes that we reform traditional conventions using the scheme he has worked out. The vagueness in his scheme can make him seem authoritarian (everyone does exactly the same thing) or libertarian (starting from and respecting each person's choice of his way to benefit vs harm.) As we will see, Confucians and Daoists start to take naturalism along these two different paths.