THE CHINESE PHILOSOPHER MO TI.¹

By HAROLD H. ROWLEY, M.A., D.D., F.B.A.

PROFESSOR OF SEMITIC LANGUAGES AND LITERATURES IN THE UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER.

THE names of Confucius and his great exponent Mencius and of Lao-tzü, the founder of Taoism,² are familiar in the West but the name of Mo Ti³ is little known. In Hastings’ Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics he received brief mention in a single column.⁴ Until 1922 the books associated with his name were untranslated into any European language, save for the chapters on Universal Love—which Legge had printed in Chinese and

¹ A lecture delivered in the John Rylands Library on Wednesday, the 10th of December, 1947.

² Whether the Lao-tzü who founded Taoism was contemporary with Confucius, as has been traditionally supposed, is now much disputed by Chinese scholars, and is increasingly doubted by Western scholars. Cf. Forke, Geschichte der alten chinesischen Philosophie, 1927, pp. 249-255, where it is held that at the latest Lao-tzü belonged to the period of Mo-tzü. Similarly, Y. L. Fung (History of Chinese Philosophy i, 1937, pp. 170-172) places the founder of Taoism in the same post-Confucian period, and holds that this founder, whose name was Li-Erh, has been confounded with a legendary figure, Lao Tan. Cf. also A. Waley, The Way and its Power, 1934, pp. 86, 101 ff., and E. R. Hughes, Chinese Philosophy in Classical Times, 1942, p. 144, the former dating the Tao Tê Ching in the third century B.C., and the latter somewhat hesitatingly at the end of the fourth century B.C. In close agreement with this last date is the view of H. Dubs, who places Lao-tzü circa 300 B.C. (Journal of the American Oriental Society, lx, 1941, pp. 215 ff.; cf. the subsequent discussion with D. Bodde, ibid., lxii, 1942, pp. 8 ff., 300 ff., and lxiv, 1944, pp. 24 ff.). Krause, Ju-Tao-Fo, 1924, pp. 136, 544, questions the tradition in a far more hesitating way.

³ The name of this philosopher stands in a great variety of forms in European works, as will be seen in the references below. The first word stands variously as Mo, Mê, Mei, Meh, Mih and Mu, while the second stands as Ti, Tih or Teih. He is also frequently referred to as Mo-tzü, which means the philosopher Mo, and here again we find Motze, Motse and various other forms. A latinized form, Micius—formed on the same principle as Confucius from K'ung-tzu and Mencius from Meng-tzü—is also found in some works.

⁴ See under Micius in vol. viii, 1915, pp. 623 f. This article is by P. J. Maclagan. Couling's Encyclopaedia Sinica, 1917, contains less than a column on Mo-tzü (p. 383), while the German encyclopaedia, Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart, 2nd ed., 5 vols., 1927-1931, contains no article devoted to him.
rendered into English in the Introduction to the second volume of his edition of the Chinese Classics—and a few selected passages incorporated in translation in some of the relatively few books and articles devoted to Mo-tzü. Yet he is described by a distinguished contemporary Chinese scholar as ‘perhaps one of the greatest souls China has ever produced’.  

In 1922 Forke translated into German the surviving texts called by his name, and prefaced the translation with a long and valuable Introduction. Five years later Tomkinson issued an English translation of a larger selection of the chapters than had appeared before in English, together with a brief Introduction and in 1929 Mei Yi-pao published an English version of most of the surviving chapters, followed a few years later by a separate volume of Introduction. In addition to these works, however, there are a number of shorter studies in European languages, mediating some knowledge of the philosopher and his work. The earliest book by a European writer devoted entirely to the exposition of Mo-tzü’s teaching was published in German by E. Faber, while articles in journals or sections of books appeared at very rare intervals from 1859 to 1896. More recently a few


3 Cf. A. Forke, Mê Ti, des Sozialtheikers und seiner schüler philosophische Werke, 1922.

4 Cf. L. Tomkinson, The Social Teachings of Meh Tse (Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan, 2nd series, iv, 1927).

5 Cf. Y.P. Mei, The Ethical and Political Works of Motse, 1929. The chapters on Logic and Defence have not been included in this translation.


7 Cf. Faber, Die Grundgedanken des alten chinesischen Sozialismus, oder die Lehre des Philosophen Micius, 1877. This work contains extracts from the chapters, together with the translator’s observations. It was translated into English in 1897 by Dr. Kupfer, but I have not had access to this translation.

short monographs have been published,\(^1\) while a number of general works have devoted some pages to this sage,\(^2\) and a few short articles have appeared in journals\(^3\) and elsewhere.\(^4\)

It is more surprising that Mo-tzu has been little known in

1894, pp. 664-685; C. de Harlez, ‘Mi Tze, le philosophe de l’amour universel’, in Giornale della Società Asiatica Italiana, viii, 1894, pp. 103-126; id., ‘Mi Tze: l’amour universel’, ibid., ix, 1895-1896, pp. 81-126 (continuing the foregoing, and incorporating translations of considerable portions); L. de Rosny, ‘Une grande lutte d’idées dans la Chine antérieure à notre ère, Meng-tze, Suin-tse, Yang-tse et Meh-tse’, in Études de Critique et d’Histoire (Bibliothèque de l’École des Hautes Études: Sciences Religieuses, vii), 1896, pp. 277-301. (Forke (Me Ti, pp. 14 f.) notes one or two others to which I have not had access.)


China until modern times. There were a few scattered references to him in the writings of Mencius and other ancient authors, but the texts in which his teachings were enshrined lay forgotten and neglected. Yet there was a time when his influence rivalled that of Confucius. Han-Fei-tzu, who lived in the third century B.C., says the two most famous schools of philosophy in his day were those of Confucius and Mo-tzu, and the *Lü Shih Ch'un Ch'iu*, an important work compiled in the middle of the same century for Lü Pu-wei, says the followers of Confucius and of Mo Ti were in every part of the empire, while Mencius, in the fourth century B.C., says 'the words of Yang Chu and Mo Ti fill the country. If you listen to people's discourses throughout it, you will find that they have adopted the views either of Yang or of Mo.' It was alarm at the spread of these two doctrines, indeed, both of which he regarded as heretical and dangerous, that moved Mencius to expound and defend the principles of Confucius. Yet despite their prevalence at that time they early fell into neglect.

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1 This is the opening sentence of chapter I of Han-Fei-tzu. The English translation of W. K. Liao, *The Complete Works of Han Fei Tzü*, has only reached chapter xxx. I am indebted to Dr. H. R. Williamson for the loan of a Chinese text of this work, and also for the loan of Forke's *Mé Ti* and Tomkinson's *Social Teachings of Meh Tse*. I may take this opportunity of acknowledging that it was the hearing of Dr. Williamson's lecture on Mo Ti, delivered in Tsinanfu in 1926 and published the following year, which first aroused my interest in Mo-tzu.

2 This has been translated into German by R. Wilhelm, *Fruhling und Herbst des Lü Bu We*, 1928. I am again indebted to Dr. H. R. Williamson for the loan of a copy of the Chinese text.


4 Cf. *Lü Shih Ch'un Ch'iu*, II, iv: 'The followers of Confucius and Mo-tzu, whose fame and influence are felt by all men everywhere, are innumerable.' Cf. also XXV, iii. For German translation, cf. Wilhelm, *op. cit.*, pp. 24, 437.


6 Wang Ch'ung in the first century of our era tells us that the teaching of Mo-tzu had already fallen into neglect (cf. A. Forke's translation of Wang Ch'ung's *Lun Hêng*, i, 1907, p. 461).
and for some two thousand years the writings in which Mo-tzū's teachings are set forth appear to have been preserved, in so far as they have been preserved, by the Taoists, whose interest was in a small amount of alchemy which they contained, and who preserved the whole for the sake of this. With the edition of Mo-tzū's works by Pi Yüan, Governor of Shensi, in 1783, an important step was taken in the rescue of the sage from neglect, and Forke observes that with this event there began a new era in the study of Mo-tzū. Further important work was done by Sun I-Jang, who published a critical edition in 1894. Neither of these editions has been accessible to me. Nor have I been able to use the more recent expositions of Mo-tzū that have appeared in Chinese, of which there have been a considerable number. The only edition of the Chinese text of Mo-tzū to which I have had access is that edited by Chang Shun-i, and published in Shanghai in 1936. The present study has therefore been based mainly on the European studies to which reference has been made. The long neglect that Mo-tzū suffered may seem the more surprising when we recall some of the things that modern students have said about him. His teachings have been described as socialism, and he has been hailed as an anticipator of Rousseau's "social contract" theory of the state. He has been described as a forerunner of John Stuart Mill in his utilitarianism. As a logician he is thought to have anticipated Aristotle, who has been regarded as the Father of Logic, while as a moral and political

1 Cf. Williamson, Mo Ti, pp. 9 f.
3 Other Chinese editions are recorded by Forke, op. cit., pp. 6-11.
4 Forke lists a number of Chinese and Japanese writers who have written on the teachings of Mo-tzū, and some supplementary titles are given by Mei, Motse, Rival of Confucius, p. 203.
5 Tomkinson (Chinese Recorder, lxvii, 1936, p. 286) observes that there had been a noticeable fall in Mo-tzū's stock in China, and ascribed it to a recrudescence of militarism.
6 Cf. the titles of the works by E. Faber, Cognetti de Martiis and Alexandra David, noted above.
8 Cf. Encyclopaedia Sinica, p. 383b: 'His chief doctrine is Utilitarianism of the kind associated with John Stuart Mill.'
teacher he has been declared infinitely superior to the greatest of the Greeks.\(^1\) The severity of his life has earned for him the name of Puritan,\(^2\) and he has frequently been called a pacifist. While this is certainly going too far, his strong opposition to all aggressive war has made him appear singularly modern.\(^3\) As one who gave his ideas on this subject practical expression, and who harnessed his scientific knowledge to the service of his ideas, he may be said to have anticipated Archimedes.\(^4\) Finally, as an exponent of the principle of universal love, he has seemed a forerunner of Christ,\(^5\) and one writer has declared that apart from his political teaching, the doctrine of Mo-tzu could be described as the twin sister of Christianity,\(^6\) while another has said that he is the only Chinese who can be said to have founded a religion.\(^7\)

So many-sided and versatile a person might have been expected to live in the memories of his fellow-countrymen, rather than to have been known for many centuries only from the brief attacks on him in the writings of better known sages. Many reasons for his eclipse have been suggested. Arthur Waley attributes his neglect to the style in which his teachings are written. He says:\(^8\)

\(^1\) Cf. de Harlez, *loc. cit.*, viii, 1894, p. 103.
\(^3\) Cf. Cheng, *op. cit.*, pp. 110 f.: 'It is remarkable that at a time distant from the present by nearly twenty-five centuries, he should have forestalled the Kellogg Pact.'
\(^4\) By his mechanical skill Archimedes successfully delivered Syracuse from its siege, while Mo-tzu, as will be seen below, was able to prevent an attack by his resource in invention.
\(^5\) Cf. Faber, *op. cit.*, p. 27. Williamson (*op. cit.*, p. 38) quotes Liang Chi-ch'ao's description of him as 'a big Marx and a little Christ'. Cf. Liang's *Chinese Political Thought*, p. 110: 'he evolved a religious system very similar to Christianity'. Other writers, however, dispute this similarity. Edkins (*loc. cit.*, p. 167) observes that 'his views, while resembling Christianity in form, are much more akin in reality to the opinions of Bentham and Paley, who, had he lived in their day, would doubtless have claimed him as an ally'. Cf. Cognetti de Martiis (*loc. cit.*, p. 261): 'Tuttavia, malgrado la identità estrinseca della formula de Mih con l'evangelica, non v'ha identità intrinseca. La lettere e in entrambe la medesima, ma lo spirito è diverso.'
\(^6\) Cf. Hoang Tsen-yue, *op. cit.*, p. 143: 'La doctrine de Mo tseu, sauf la politique, a tant de ressemblance avec celle du Christianisme que l'on peut les prendre comme deux sœurs jumelles.'
\(^8\) Cf. *Three Ways of Thought*, pp. 163 f.
The Analects of Confucius are forcible and pointed; at times they even rise to a sort of austere beauty. Mencius contains some of the subtlest and most vivid passages in Chinese literature. The Tao Te Ching, most frequently translated of all Chinese books, is an occultist kaleidoscope, a magic void that the reader can fill with what images he will; Chuang Tzu is one of the most entertaining as well as one of the profoundest books in the world. Whereas Mo-tzu is feeble, repetitive, heavy, unimaginative and unentertaining, devoid of a single passage that could possibly be said to have wit, beauty or force. If Mo-tzu is neglected in Europe it is because he expounds his on the whole rather sympathetic doctrines with a singular lack of aesthetic power. This infelicity of style was noted in China. For Han-Fei-tzü already drew attention to it, and thought that it was deliberate. He says: 1 ‘The king of Ch'u said to T'ien Chiu, “Mo-tzu was a famous teacher, yet though he was all right in himself his style was prolix and loose. Why was this?” He replied: “There was once a noble of Ch'in who married his daughter to the son of the duke of Chin. He requested Chin to provide the deckings and the garments, whereupon he sent seventy beautifully dressed bridesmaids to Chin. The bridegroom fell in love with a bridesmaid and despised the noble's daughter. The noble may be said to have excellently married the maid, but can hardly be said to have excellently married his daughter. There was a man of Ch'u who sold pearls in Chêng. He made a casket of fragrant wood, perfumed with cassia and spices, adorned with pearls and jade, bedecked with roses, and beautified with feathers. A man of Chêng bought his casket but gave him back the pearls. This merchant may be said to have excellently sold the casket, but can hardly be said to have excellently sold pearls. The discussions of the present day all emphasize stylistic and rhetorical qualities, so that men enjoy their elegance and forget their content. Mo-tzu's teaching expounded the ways of the ancient kings and discussed the words of the sages. In teaching men he had cultivated lucidity of style, he feared they would have cherished it for its literary worth and would have forgotten its inner truth. For the

1 Han-Fei-tzü xxxii. This chapter has not yet appeared in Liao's translation.
sake of the style they would have lost the content, and this would have been like the man of Ch’u selling pearls and the noble of Ch’in marrying his daughter. Therefore was he verbose and obscure.”

It is improbable, however, that this is the cause of the neglect of Mo-tzü in either East or West. His neglect in the West has been due to the inaccessibility of his works in European languages until recently, and that in turn rests in part on the long neglect of him in China.¹ His neglect in China, however, can hardly be due to the style in which his teachings have been preserved. For there was a time, as has been said, when his fame spread throughout China, and his teachings had a considerable vogue. Various other causes have been suggested, which may in part have contributed to his eclipse. Hu Shih suggests that his utilitarianism acted as a boomerang and brought about its own downfall,² since its doctrines of universal love and anti-militarism were incompatible with the needs of the age. Tomkinson, on the other hand, cites the view that with the passing of the feudal aristocracy of the period of the Warring States, the raison d’être of Moism was gone, and hence it no longer survived.³ The same writer makes an alternative suggestion, that the main doctrines of Moism were incorporated into rival systems, and notably the pacifism of Mo-tzü was taken into the teaching of Mencius and thus into Confucianism, and hence the separate existence of Moism was now superfluous.⁴ On the other hand de Harlez thought that it was the bitter hostility of Mencius to the teachings of Mo-tzü which effectively terminated its influence.⁵ But Moism continued to flourish for some time after Mencius, and neither this nor any of these suggestions is very convincing.

¹ This is, indeed, recognized by Waley, who says (op. cit., p. 164): ‘Of course part of the obscurity of Mo-tzü in the West is due to the fact that he was till recently very little studied in China.’
² Development of Logical Method, pp. 61 f.
⁴ Ibid., p. 296.
⁵ Cf. Giornale della Società Asiatica Italiana, viii, 1894, p. 103: ‘L’oubli complet dans lequel il est resté, bien plus cette espèce de reprobation dont il a été frappé dans sa patrie, sont dus aux anathèmes prononcées contre lui par Meng-tze.’
It is possible that the divisions that broke out amongst the followers of Mo-tzu in the century after his death may have had some effect on its fortunes and helped to bring about its eclipse. For Mo-tzu organized his followers under a head who has been likened to the Roman Pope. He himself was doubtless the first holder of this office, to which the title of Chü-tzu was attached, and within thirty years of his death he was succeeded by Mêng Shêng, T'ien-Hsiang-tzû and Fu Tun. It has been suggested that the holders of this office formed a sort of 'Suicides' Club'.

Before the end of the fourth century B.C. there were three sectional heads, under the Chü-tzu, each in charge of a geographical area, and all quarrelling among themselves and scheming for the succession to the chief office. Han-Fei-tzû says: "After the death of Mo-tzu there was the Moist school of Hsiang Li, the Moist school of Hsiang Fu, and the Moist school of Têng Ling. Hence, after the time of Confucius and Mo-tzu, Confucianism split into eight schools and Moism into three, disagreeing in what they accept and reject, and each claiming to be the true school."

The differences within Moism seem to have been more acute than those within Confucianism, perhaps in part because of the organization of the former, and the personal ambitions that accentuated the differences. From Chuang-tzû, the great exponent of Taoism, we learn of these ambitions. He says: "The followers of Hsiang Li Chi'in such as Wu Hou and the Moists of the South such as K'ü Huo, Chi Tz'u and Teng Ling, all recite the same scriptures of Moism but interpret them differently, calling each other heretics of Moism. They criticize one another for their notions of solidity, whiteness, similarity, and dissimilarity; they argue with one another about the contradiction or non-contradiction between the odd and the even. All, however, regard the Elder

1 Cf. Tomkinson, loc. cit., p. 292.
2 Cf. Han-Fei-tzû 1. This chapter is not included in Liao's translation yet. The Chinese text of this passage, which stands near the beginning of the chapter, is quoted in Forke, Me Ti, p. 75.
3 Chuang-tzû, xxxiii. The above rendering is that of Y. P. Mei (op. cit., p. 167). Cf. the renderings of Legge (Sacred Books of the East, xl, 1891, pp. 220 f.), and Giles (Chuang Tzu: Mystic, Moralist and Social Reformer, 1926, pp. 442 f.). The Chinese text with French translation is given in Wieger, Taoisme, ii, 1913, pp. 500 f., while Forke gives the Chinese text of part of the passage (op. cit., p. 75).
Master as the Wise Man, aspiring to be his medium in order to become his successor. They cannot come to an agreement even at this time." This would suggest that even Mo-tzu's own professed followers were more concerned with trifling academic disputes than with the great principles which Mo-tzu proclaimed. It could hardly be expected therefore, that they would commend his principles to their contemporaries.

Other important suggestions to explain the failure of Moism are made by Granet and Waley. The former thinks that its excessive challenge of the strongly rooted family tradition of China militated against its success, while the latter thinks its psychological weakness, in failing to understand the complexity of the human heart, was a serious weakness. While there may be a measure of truth in these suggestions, they do not explain why it was that Moism once had the hold in China it is said to have had, and then lost it. This still remains obscure, and the total eclipse of this once influential teaching until its revival in modern times remains an unexplained fact.

Because of this long neglect, little is known of Mo-tzu's life. Some of the few facts and incidents mentioned in the records will be noted below in the account of his teachings. Here it may be noted that Ssu-Ma Ch'ien, the father of Chinese history, devotes but twenty-four words to him in the course of his great work, though there is a further reference in the Preface, to which we shall return. The twenty-four words say: 'Mo Ti was a great officer in the state of Sung. He was skilful in military defence

1 I.e. Chü-tzū, the head of the Moists. Giles (loc. cit.) treats this as a proper name here—' Chü Tzū was their Sage, and they wanted to canonise him as a saint, that they might carry on his doctrines in after ages'—and Forke (op. cit., pp. 75 f.) says that this is following Kao Yu, who takes this erroneous view. Legge failed to understand the title, and rendered: 'They regarded their most distinguished member as a sage, and wished to make him their chief, hoping that he would be handed down to future ages' (loc. cit.).

2 Cf. La pensée chinoise, p. 500.

3 Cf. Three Ways of Thought, pp. 180 f.

4 It may interest the curious to know that Mo-tzu is credited with the invention of the kite. Huai-Nan-tzū says that he made a wooden kite which he flew for three days without its coming down (cf. de Groot, loc. cit., p. 665). The same story is referred to by Wang Ch'ung (cf. Lun Hêng, translated by A. Forke, i, 1907, pp. 498 f., ii, 1911, p. 353).
and taught economy. Some say that he was contemporary with Confucius, others that he was after him.\textsuperscript{1} That he lived after Confucius is now generally agreed, while it is certain that he lived before Mencius. His life fell therefore within the century 480-380 B.C., though more exact agreement cannot be secured.\textsuperscript{2} At that time China was under the nominal rule of an emperor of the Chou dynasty whose power was slight, and the rulers of the separate states into which the land was divided\textsuperscript{3} were for all practical purposes independent rulers, giving no more than nominal allegiance to the emperor and warring amongst themselves. The period is therefore known as the age of the Warring States. The more powerful princes plundered the states of the weaker, and the miseries of the common people, who were called to shed their blood in these useless wars, and to see their homes destroyed and plundered, were intense. On the other hand, luxury and extravagance flourished at the courts of the more powerful princes and there were great extremes of poverty and wealth. The evils of the time are reflected in the writings of Mencius no less than in the work of Mo-tzu. In Mencius we find:\textsuperscript{4} 'Now

\textsuperscript{1} The section of Ssu-Ma Ch'ien in which this passage stands is not included in the translation of Chavannes, \textit{Les memoires historiques de Se-ma-Ts'ien}, 5 vols., 1895-1905. The twenty-four characters are quoted by Forke, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 25.

\textsuperscript{2} Wieger says he probably died before 400 B.C. (\textit{Histoire des Croyances}, p. 207 = E.T., p. 207); Hu Shih (\textit{Development of Logical Method}, p. 56) dates him from 500 to 420 B.C.; Wilhelm (\textit{Die chinesischen Literatur}, p. 57) from 500-490 B.C. to 425-415; Z. L. Yih (\textit{Hirth Anniversary Volume}, p. 613) 'somewhere between 500-416 B.C.'; Forke (\textit{Me Ti}, p. 27; \textit{cf. Geschichte der alten chinesischen Philosophie}, p. 369) assigns him to the period 480-400 B.C.; Ch'ien Mu (\textit{cf. Fung, op. cit.}, p. 76) to the period 479-381 B.C.; Sun I-jang (\textit{cf. Fung, \textit{ibid.}}) to 468-376 B.C.; Liang Ch'i-ch'ao (\textit{cf. Mei, Motse, Rival of Confucius}, p. 31) reaches the conclusion that his life ran from 466-459 B.C. to 390-382 B.C.; while Y. P. Mei (\textit{op. cit.}, pp. 31 ff.) 'for convenience of memory' uses the dates 470-391 B.C. Hoang Tsen-yue does not define the date of his birth, but concludes that he died somewhere between 392 and 382 B.C. C. de Harlez (\textit{Giornale della Societa Asiatica Italiana}, viii, 1894, p. 104) assigns him to the period between the last years of the fifth century and the last quarter of the fourth century, but this must surely be a century later than de Harlez really meant, or else 'last' must stand for 'first'.

\textsuperscript{3} It should be remembered that the southern and western parts of what is China to-day consisted then of barbarian tribes outside the Chinese empire.

the state of things is different. A host marches in attendance on the ruler, and stores of provisions are consumed. The hungry are deprived of their food, and there is no rest for those who are called to toil. Maledictions are uttered by one to another with eyes askance, and the people proceed to the commission of wickedness. Thus the royal ordinances are violated, and the people are oppressed, and the supplies of food and drink flow away like water. The rulers yield themselves to the current, or they urge their way against it; they are wild; they are utterly lost:—these things proceed to the grief of the inferior princes.

Some have supposed that Mo-tzu belonged to the state of Sung, which fell within what is now known as Honan. This may be because of Ssu-Ma Ch'ien's reference to his official position there. It is generally held to be more probable that he was a native of the state of Lu, which comprised an area in the western part of the modern Shantung. In that case he belonged to the same state as Confucius. It is not even certain that we know his name. For Mo is a very uncommon surname, and various suggestions have been made as to how he came to be known by it. One is that he lived for a time at a place called Mo near to Tsingtao, and later adopted this name, while another is that it was a term of contempt bestowed upon him by others. In ancient China the punishment of branding and reduction to slavery was denoted by the term mo, and it is suggested that it was because of the austere frugality advocated by Mo-tzu that this term was used in contempt. In his Preface Ssu-Ma Ch'ien says: 'Mo-tzu lived in a small house built of rough unworked timbers, with a thatched roof. He used none but earthenware utensils, and partook of the coarsest food. His clothing was of the simplest, of skin or grass according to the season. He was buried in a plain coffin of thin boards.'

Whether Mo-tzu was ever an official of Sung, as Ssu-Ma

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1 Cf. Y. L. Fung, op. cit., p. 77; Forke, Mé Ti, p. 29.
4 Cf. Fung, op. cit., p. 79.
5 Translation quoted from Williamson, op. cit., p. 3. This passage is not included in Chavannes' translation, and I have not had access to the Chinese text of the Shih Chi of Ssu-Ma Ch'ien.
Ch‘ien states, is much disputed by modern scholars,\(^1\) but Fung Yu-lan thinks \(^2\) his teaching is best explained if he were a native of Lu, who first came under the influence of Confucian teachings, and later became an official of Sung, where he adopted some of the Sung ideas and ideals, which have been found to be much akin to his teaching. This view would scarcely seem to require that he became an official of Sung. That he visited Sung is generally agreed, and a visit, especially if it were a long one, could as well bring him into contact with Sung thought as an official position. That Mo-tzu was first a Confucianist is stated by Huai-Nan-tzu, who says:\(^3\) ‘Mo-tzu studied the profession of the Confucianists and received the arts of Confucius. But he considered that the rites [of the Confucian school] were troublesome and displeasing, its stress on elaborate funerals was wealth-consuming and impoverished the people, and its practice of lengthy mourning periods was injurious to the living and harmful to human affairs. Thereupon he turned his back on the Chou dynasty practices and made use of the methods of government of the Hsia dynasty’.

The collection of writings which bears Mo-tzu’s name did not all come from his pen, though it is probable that it gives a reliable summary of his teachings.\(^4\) The surviving chapters are distributed amongst fifteen books, and this agrees with the oldest information we have. There have, however, been some losses from these books. For they once contained seventy-one chapters, and at a later date sixty-one, while to-day no more that fifty-three are extant. These have all been included in Forke’s German translation, but the English rendering of Y. P. Mei omits what he describes as the chapters on Logic and Defence, and Tomkinson’s omits certain other chapters in addition. By the chapters on Logic Mei means six chapters contained in Books X and XI, sometimes referred to as Mo Pien, or Mo-tzu’s Discussions.

\(^1\) Cf. Forke, Mé Ti, p. 30; Williamson, op. cit., p. 3; Tomkinson, Social Teachings of Meh Tse, p. 6.
\(^3\) Translation of D. Bodde in Fung, op. cit., p. 77, where the passage is quoted. It is also translated by Mei, op. cit., p. 42. Cf. Williamson, op. cit., p. 4.
The first two of these are Ching, or Canon, and are the most difficult to interpret of all the chapters. The other four chapters are commentary and appendix, or illustrations. Hu Shih holds that these have nothing to do with Mo-tzū, but contain the work of a later distinct school of scientific and logical Neo-Moists. Others attribute the first two chapters to Mo-tzū himself, the commentary to a disciple—possibly Têng Ling—and the remaining two chapters to later hands, while Tomkinson observes that it still seems possible, on the evidence available, to regard these chapters as the work of Meh Tse himself or of his earliest disciples, and not necessarily as produced by the Sophists of a considerably later age.

The chapters on Defence comprise the last eleven surviving chapters, and these again are full of technical terms and very hard to understand or to translate. Preceding them is a chapter which Mei and Tomkinson translate, and which is believed to have been an introduction to these chapters. It contains an account of an interview of Mo-tzū with an official of the state of Ch'u, who gives his name to the chapter, Kung Shu. At some of the contents of this chapter we shall have occasion later to look.

Of far greater importance and interest are the chapters known as the Synoptic Chapters. This is because they survive in three versions—or in some cases one or two, though probably there were originally three—and it has been surmised that these were the forms accepted by the rival schools above referred to. This is speculative and doubtful, and is hardly supported by the above cited passage which tells of these divisions. For it declares that

1 Mei observes that Forke's rendering of these chapters not infrequently misses the meaning of the original (Motse, Rival of Confucius, p. 57).

2 Cf. Development of Logical Method, pp. 59 f. Hu Shih refers to these chapters as 'Books 32-37'. They are numbered as chapters xl-xliv in the translations of Forke and Mei, and in the Chinese text to which I have had access.

3 Cf. Williamson, op. cit., p. 12; Fung, op. cit., p. 80.


5 Tomkinson (The Social Teachings of Meh Tse, p. 18) says no one has seriously attributed these chapters to Mo-tzū, and there is an old but doubtful tradition that they are the work of Ch'in Hua-li, an early disciple.

6 Cf. Williamson, op. cit., p. 12. Tomkinson and Mei, however, connect this chapter rather with the four chapters of 'Mo-tzū Analects' noted below.

7 Cf. Mei, op. cit., p. 54; Williamson, op. cit., p. 13.
the various groups all cherished the same scriptures, but quarrelled about their interpretation. Tomkinson says that 'the general trend of opinion amongst scholars seems to be that the versions are the work of three disciples, or three groups of disciples, not, however, the three groups mentioned by Han Fei Tse'. He himself prefers to think that they all come from Mo-tzu's own hand, and represent his treatment of the subjects at different periods of his life. It is in these chapters that we have the main teachings of Mo-tzu set forth. They deal with:

1. the Exaltation of the Virtuous (*shang hsien*);
2. the Promotion of Unity (*shang t'ung*);
3. Universal Love (*chien ai*);
4. Against Aggressive War (*fei kung*);
5. Economy of Expenditure (*chieh yung*);
6. Economy in Funeral Rites (*chieh tsang*);
7. the Will of Heaven (*T'ien chih*);
8. the Existence of Spirits (*ming kuei*);
9. Against Music (*fei yo*);
10. Against Fatalism (*fei ming*);
11. Against Confucianism (*fei ju*).

Of the thirty-two chapters originally devoted to these subjects twenty-four are extant, two only on Economy of Expenditure having survived, and one each on Economy in Funeral Rites, the Existence of Spirits, Against Music, and Against Confucianism. It would appear that there were never more than two versions of the last. Not all of these chapters are accepted as authentic, and Tomkinson relegates the chapters Against Music, and Against Confucianism to the category of the questionably authentic. In the latter case doubt is especially widely shared.

Four other chapters form an important group, rather after the style of the Confucian *Analects*. These contain memories of Mo-tzu and accounts of incidents in his life and illustrations of his methods of teaching. They are held to be generally reliable. The titles of three of them give little indication of their contents, while the fourth has something of the flavour of Amos about its title. These chapters are called:

1. Kêng Chu (a proper name);
2. the Importance of Righteousness (kuei i);
3. Kung Meng (a proper name);
4. the Inquiry of Lu (i.e. of the ruler of Lu).

The remaining seven chapters stand first in the collection, but these are regarded as of questionable authenticity or spurious. They are all included in Mei's translation, and the last four of them, which are less firmly rejected and which are more closely related to Mo-tzû's principal teachings, are included in Tomkinson's translation. It will be seen, therefore, that in general we should rely on the Synoptic Chapters and the Mo-tzû 'Analects' for the study of the sage's teaching. It is here that his characteristic ideas are expounded.

Of his logic little can here be said. He was impatient of shallow thought that played with words. In the chapter Kung Meng we read: 'Mo-tzû asked a Confucianist, saying: 'What is the purpose of Music?' He replied: 'Music is for music's sake.' Mo-tzû answered: 'You have not yet answered my question. If I were to ask what is the purpose of a house, and you replied that it was to give protection against the cold in winter and against the heat in summer, and to separate men from women, you would have given me the reason for building a house. But when I ask what is the purpose of music and you answer that music is for music's sake, it is like answering the question what a house is for by saying 'A house is built for the sake of a house.' '

A more penetrating observation is contained in Mo-tzû's comment on a saying of Confucius. We read: 'Tzû Kao, the

1 Cf. Hu Shih, Development of Logical Method, pp. 63 ff., and H. Maspero, 'Notes sur la logique de Mo-tseu et de son école', in T'oung Pao, xxv, 1928, pp. 1-64.
2 Hu Shih (op. cit., p. 65) renders here 'Music is an amusement', giving to the repeated character two different senses and relieving the tautology. The word can, indeed, have the second sense, and in the opening chapter of the Confucian Analects it has that sense, where Legge (The Chinese Classics, i, 2nd ed., 1893, p. 137) renders 'Is it not delightful to have friends coming from distant quarters?' It is likely that the second sense was in the mind of the Confucianist, so that we have a pun (cf. Fung, op. cit., p. 86), but it is clear from the reply that Mo-tzû understood it to be completely tautologous. Cf. Forke, Mé Ti, p. 570 n.
Duke of Shê, asked Chung Ni about government, saying: "What is the good governor like?" Chung Ni replied: "The good governor draws near those who are afar, and reforms what is obsolete." When Mo-tzû heard this, he observed: "Tzû Kao, the Duke of Shê, did not put his question right, nor did Chung Ni give a correct reply. For how could Tzû Kao, the Duke of Shê, fail to know that the good governor draws near those who are afar, and reforms what is obsolete? What he wished to know was how to effect this. The answer did not tell him what he did not know, but only what he already knew." Here, as throughout Mo-tzû's teaching, we find a practical application of his logical faculties. He is never content to think he has solved a problem when he has given a name to it, and empty words have no meaning for him. He said: 'Teaching that can be expressed in deeds may be constantly given; what cannot be given effect should not be constantly taught. When what cannot be given effect is constantly taught, we have but idle words.'

His appeal is constantly to the reason. This is well illustrated by his condemnation of aggressive war. 'To kill one man is said to be criminal and to merit the death penalty. To kill ten men then is tenfold criminal and merits the death penalty tenfold. To kill a hundred men is a hundredfold criminal and merits the death penalty a hundredfold. All the gentlemen of the world know this, and pronounce these things to be criminal. Yet when we come to the greatest crime, the attacking of a state, they do not know that they should condemn it, but on the contrary applaud it and pronounce it righteous. . . . If there were a man who on seeing a little blackness said it was black, but on seeing a lot of blackness said it was white, we should certainly consider that he

1 I.e. Confucius.
2 This saying of Confucius is not preserved in quite this form in the Confucian Analects, where we find: 'The Duke of Sheh asked about government. The Master said, 'Good government obtains, when those who are near are made happy, and those who are far off are attracted'" (Analects XIII xvi, translation of Legge, The Chinese Classics, i, 2nd ed., p. 269; cf. Couvreur, Les Quatre Livres, p. 216).
4 Mo-tzû xlvi. Cf. Forke, op. cit., p. 544; Tomkinson, op. cit., p. 126; Mei, op. cit., p. 217. This saying is repeated in chap. xlvii.
was unable to distinguish between white and black. If he were to taste a little bitterness and pronounce it bitter but on tasting a lot of bitterness should pronounce it sweet, we should certainly say that he was unable to distinguish between sweet and bitter. So they who reckon a small crime to be worthy of condemnation, but who do not condemn the greatest crime, even the attacking of a state, but on the contrary applaud it and pronounce it righteous, may be said to be incapable of distinguishing between right and wrong.¹

Mo-tzú's opposition to the wanton aggression that led to the innumerable wars of his day was fundamental, and it dictated one of the principal elements of his teaching. He stressed the point just illustrated that it failed to apply on the grand scale standards universally recognized on the small. 'The gentlemen of the world recognize trifles but not great things', he said. 'If a man steals a dog or a pig, he is held to commit a sin against humanity; if he steals a state or a city, this is held to be righteous.'² The same thing is said by Chuang-tzú, but with nothing of the moral earnestness of Mo-tzú. For Chuang-tzú spoke as a satirist rather than as a reformer when he observed: 'One man steals a purse and is punished; another steals a state and becomes a Prince.'³ But Mo-tzú was less the keen observer than the prophet of reform. He not alone denounced the criminality of war, but also its futility. 'When great states attack small states', he said, 'it is like children playing at horses. Children playing at horses only tire and weary themselves. When a great state attacks a small one, the farmers of the state attacked cannot attend to their ploughing and the womenfolk cannot attend to their weaving, since all are engaged on defence. Similarly the farmers of the attacking state cannot attend to their ploughing and the womenfolk cannot attend to their weaving, since all are


engaged on attack. Hence, when great states attack small states, it is like children playing at horses.'

This appeal to utilitarian motives was also characteristic of Mo-tzū. But he went far beyond this and stripped off the veneer of glory that successful wars were thought to bring, and exposed the hollow nature of so many of the victories. For he held that aggression brought nemesis, which the victory of to-day is powerless to avert. When the state of Ch‘i was going to attack its neighbour Lu, Mo-tzū pointed his criticism by saying: ‘Formerly the king of Wu attacked Yüeh in the east and drove his people to Kuei Chi for refuge. In the west he attacked Ch‘u and shut up King Chao in Sui. In the north he attacked Ch‘i and took the Crown Prince prisoner to Wu. Then the nobles exacted vengeance, and his own people were wretched and exhausted and refused to serve him, so that the state came to disaster, and the king himself was executed.’

He knew how to prick the bubbles of high motive with which the aggressors sought to disguise their selfish ends. When he sought to dissuade Prince Wên from attacking the state of Chêng, he was asked ‘Why should you, sir, prevent me from attacking Chêng? For three generations have the people of Chêng slain their ruler.’ Heaven has visited them with punishment and caused the harvest to fail for three years. I am only helping Heaven to punish them.’ To this Mo-tzū replied: ‘Suppose there were a man whose son was bad tempered and good for nothing, so that his father thrashed him. If his neighbour’s father took up a cudgel and struck him, and said “I am only striking him in accordance with his father’s will”, would not this be very foolish?’


2 This rendering follows Forke, taking the characters kuo tsū to mean ‘state son’, i.e. Crown Prince. Alternatively they are taken to refer to Kuo Shu, who was a general of Ch‘i.


4 Literally, father. Tomkison understands it to mean that three generations of rulers had slain their fathers.

Nor did he rely on moral suasion alone. He employed his inventive wit to devise measures of defence. For Mo-tzū was not a pacifist, who refused to countenance any form of warfare. He opposed aggressive war, but found no wrong in defence against attack, and on one occasion, on hearing that the state of Ch’u was about to attack Sung, he travelled to Ch’u to avert this attack. His appeals at first fell on deaf ears. The ruler of Ch’u relied on some new invention, called ‘cloud ladders’ against which he thought there was no defence, and so proposed to reap an easy and certain victory. Getting nowhere with the prince, Mo-tzū turned to the inventor of the ‘cloud ladders’, Kung Shu Pan, and taking his girdle to represent the city wall and a writing tablet to represent military equipment, he challenged the inventor to capture the city. Nine times Kung Shu Pan employed his strategy and as many times Mo-tzū foiled his attack, leaving Kung Shu Pan at a loss for a plan and Mo-tzū still with defensive plans in reserve. Then an ugly thought crossed Kung Shu Pan’s mind. ‘I know how I can get the better of you’, he said, ‘though I prefer not to say.’ ‘I know what you have in mind’, replied Mo-tzū, ‘but neither will I say.’ The ruler now inquired what this plan was, and Mo-tzū replied: ‘Kung Shu Pan’s idea is just to have me murdered. He thinks that when I am dead, Sung will be helpless in defence, and he can then attack it. But my disciples, Ch’in Hua-li and others, to the number of three hundred, are already armed with my implements of defence and manning the walls of Sung, awaiting the brigands of Ch’u. Even though I be murdered, you will still not cut off my defence.’ The ruler of Ch’u thereupon decided to call off the projected attack.  

In this story we have an illustration of the principle of universal love which Mo-tzū both advocated and practised, and which was his cardinal heresy in the eyes of his critics. He was not actuated by patriotism, since Sung was not his own state, but simply by the love of men and by his firm anti-aggressive principles. For Mo-tzū held that the ills of society sprang from partiality and discrimination, and that a world in which all loved all equally would be an ideal world. He said: ‘If we could

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cause all men to feel a universal mutual love (chien hsiang ai) so that every man loved all others as himself, would there be anyone unfilial? If they loved father, elder brother and prince as themselves, they would hate to display unfilial feeling. . . . Would there be any thieves or robbers? When men regarded the houses of others as their own, who would rob? When they regarded the persons of others as their own, who would steal? Hence thieves and robbers would be no more. Would there be mutual discord among the families of the great and mutual aggression among the states of the princes? When each loved his neighbour's family as his own, who would create discord? When each loved his neighbour's state as his own, who would invade? Therefore mutual discord among the families of the great and mutual aggression among the states of the princes would be no more.  

Or again he said: 'Suppose there are two men, of whom one adopts the principle of making distinctions (pieh) and the other adopts the principle of universality (chien). The first will say "How can I consider my friend's person as my own, my friend's kin as mine?" Hence, if he sees his friend in hunger, he will not feed him, or if he sees him cold, he will not clothe him; if he finds him sick, he will not minister to him, if dead, he will not bury him. Such is the language, and such the conduct of the advocate of making distinctions. Quite other will be the language and the conduct of the advocate of universality. He will say: "I have heard that he who would be great among men should consider his friend as himself, his friend's kin as his own, for so alone can he be great among men."' Hence, if he sees his friend in hunger, he will feed him, or if he sees him cold, will clothe him; if he finds him sick, he will minister to him, if dead, will bury him. Such is the language, and such the conduct of the advocate of universality.  

It is clear from the whole tenour of this passage that Mo-tzū would give to the word 'friend' here as wide a connotation as


Jesus did to 'neighbour' in the parable of the Good Samaritan.

Of the loftiness and nobility of such teaching there can be no

question, and Mei observes that 'it may be regarded as a concrete

expression of the Christian Golden Rule'.

In his own day Mo-tzü was criticized as doctrinaire. He says: 'The gentlemen

of the world say: "While it would be a fine thing if love could be

universal, it is utterly impracticable. It is like taking up T'ai

Shan and leaping over the Huang Ho or the River Chi."' To

this Mo-tzü replied that the ancient kings had practised his prin­
ciples, and that therefore they were practicable. Elsewhere we

read that he defended himself against the charge that his teaching

would not work by saying: 'If it were not practicable, then even

I would reject it. Is it possible that anything should be good and

yet impracticable?' The criticism of impracticability was re­

newed by Chuang-tzü, who granted that Mo-tzü himself could

carry out his own teachings, but who doubted if the ordinary man

was capable of such heights of conduct. Similarly Wang Ch'ung

observed: 'The Confucian doctrine has come down to us, that

of Mê Ti has fallen into desuetude, because the Confucian

principles can be put in use, while the Mêhist system is very
difficult to practise. That Mo-tzü did in fact put his principles into practice is

admitted by all. 'The philosopher Mo loves all equally', said Mencius. 'If by rubbing smooth his whole body from the

crown to the heel, he could have benefitted the kingdom, he would

have done it.' When he journeyed to Ch'u to prevent the attack

on Sung, he travelled at great discomfort in his unselfish desire

2 A sacred mountain in Shantung, often visited by Confucius.
4 Mo-tzü xvi. Cf. Legge, op. cit., p. 110; David, op. cit., p. 45; Forke, op. cit., p. 255; Mei, op. cit., p. 89. (Tomkinson, op. cit., p. 54, omits the quoted sentence.)
5 Chuang-tzü xxxiii. Cf. Legge, Sacred Books of the East, xl, p. 219; Giles, Chuang Tzu, p. 441; Wieger, Taoïsme, ii, pp. 500 f. (where the Chinese text is also given).
6 Cf. Lun Hêng (translated by Forke), i, p. 461.
to avert a needless war. 'The following story' says Hu Shih, 'told in numerous sources, best portrays the spirit of Mohism and the character of its founder. Kung Shu Pan, the State Engineer of Chu, had just completed his new invention of a "cloud ladder" for besieging walled cities, and the King of Chu was planning an invasion into the State of Sung. When Mo Ti learned of this he started out from his native state and travelled ten days and ten nights all on foot, arriving at the capital city with sun-burnt face and battered feet'.

This story is found in the Lü Shih Ch'ün Ch'iu, where it is added that he was forced to tear up his clothes to bandage his blistered feet. Little wonder that Chuang-tzu should describe him as 'one of the best men in the world, which you may search without finding his equal. Decayed and worn his person might be, but he is not to be rejected—a scholar of ability indeed.'

It was not because his teaching was thought to be impracticable, however, that it was so bitterly opposed by Mencius and regarded as a serious menace to society. What is impracticable may be trusted not to be practised. But Mencius was seriously afraid that Mo-tzu's teaching might be taken seriously. He classed him with Yang Chu as a dangerous heretic. To Christian readers it seems at first sight odd that Yang Chu, who is said by Legge to be 'about "the least erected spirit" who ever professed to reason concerning the life and duties of man', should be classed with Mo-tzu, who is so frequently compared with Christ. For Yang Chu advocated only the most naked selfishness, and complete indifference to every interest but one's own. To Mencius,
however, both seemed to menace the foundations of society, though in such different ways. For Yang Chu’s pure individualism denied any idea of a duty towards others, while Mo-tzü’s indiscriminating love ignored the special claims of kindred. ‘Yang’s principle’, said Mencius, ‘is “each one for himself”’, which does not acknowledge the claims of the sovereign. Mo’s principle is “to love all equally”, which does not acknowledge the peculiar affection due to a father. But to acknowledge neither king nor father is to be in the state of a beast. . . . If the principles of Yang and Mo be not stopped, and the principles of Confucius not set forth, then those perverse speakings will delude the people, and stop up the path of benevolence and righteousness. When benevolence and righteousness are stopped up, beasts will be led on to devour men, and men will devour one another.’

What Mo-tzü said, as we have seen, was that universal love would include the love of parent and friend. He was trying to lift the love of all to the same high level that Confucius and Mencius demanded for the nearest and dearest. Yet in denying that there were any with special claim on us he seemed to Mencius to be a peril. For to Mencius the corollary of the principle that my neighbour’s parents have as great a claim on me as my own was that my parents have no greater claim on me than my neighbour’s. He was, therefore, loosening the special ties of kindred, which belonged to the very foundations of society. Fundamentally the same criticism is made by Hsün-tzü, who says: ‘Micius has insight about what is universal but not about the individual. . . . If one considers the universal, but not the particular, then the government cannot operate.’ The whole essence of the Confucian view of man lay in its balanced estimate of his nature and duty. Extreme selfishness and extreme unselfishness were alike to Mencius in being extremes, and extremes have a tendency to

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2 Cf. Wilhelm, *Die chinesischen Literatur*, p. 58: ‘Mo Ti mit seiner allgemeinen Liebe kenne keinen Vater, d.h. keinen Familienorganismus.’
meet. And indeed, as we have seen, they did soon meet in the chief followers of Mo-tzu. When his followers split into sections whose leaders were each ambitious to become the Chü-tzu, it is hard not to find the principle of selfishness, and 'each one for himself' at work.

Moreover the teaching of Mo-tzu is frequently criticized in that there was in it an appeal to self-interest. For combined with the principle of universal mutual love (chien hsiang ai) we find the principle of the mutual conferring of profit (chiao hsiang li), and the idealism of Mo-tzu is held to become a mere utilitarianism. This was another element in the criticism of Hsün-tzu, who flourished a little later than Mencius. He observed that 'if we consider life from the standpoint of utility, it will merely be seeking for profit'.¹ The same complaint has been made by modern writers too.² For if unselfishness is pursued because it pays, then its pursuit is rooted in its antithesis. It is true that Mo-tzu emphasizes the material benefits that would, he believed, follow the adoption of his principles, and sometimes gave the impression that he was a mere pragmatist. Already we have noted a saying which suggests his belief that the good was the useful. 'Is it possible that anything should be good and yet impracticable?'³ And in the Mo-tzu Classic, or Canon, we find 'Righteousness is profit',⁴ which could easily be represented as the view that 'righteousness is merely what pays'. It is only fair to Mo-tzu to say that if it is true that mutual love is mutually beneficial, the paradox is in experience and it is but clear-sightedness to perceive it and simple truth to enunciate it. In the teaching of the Bible the will of God is the only basis for the well-being of man, and more than one passage describes the incomparable beauty of a world in which that will should be perfectly done. Yet the selfish, who are only concerned for their own well-being, and

² Cf. Krause, Ju-Tao-Fo, 1924, p. 89: 'Die Menschenliebe ist bei ihm aber nur ein Mittel, um den möglichsten Frieden des eignen Lebens zu geniessen. Das Motiv ist kein rein humanitares, wie der gleiche Grundsatz in der christlichen Ethik, sondern ein utilitaristisches.'
³ Mo-tzu xvi.
⁴ Mo-tzu xl (I li yeh). Cf. Forke, op. cit., p. 415. This chapter is untranslated by Tomkinson or Mei.
eager to possess that world, can never do the will of God. It should not be forgotten that Mo-tzū taught the love of others, whose corollary rather than whose source was mutual good. E. R. Hughes says: ‘His utilitarian mind made him construe love in terms of doing good, being useful to your fellow men.’ That this is true cannot be gainsaid, and it was probably due in no small measure to the conditions of his time. Christian missionaries have been known in times of famine to spend their time in famine relief, and have not been ashamed of so doing. And if in times of desperate ills Mo-tzu was moved with pity for the sufferings of men we need not be surprised or condemn him. He neither preached nor practised a cold, calculating search for profit, but inculcated a self-forgetting love whose profit would only be universal when its practice was universal. Nor did he ever suggest that the individuals who followed him could begin to enter into the dividends at once. The dividends could only accrue when the practice was general, and until then he offered self-sacrifice and suffering rather than profit. Liang Ch‘i-ch‘ao says: ‘Motze’s theory does not consider the individual at all. According to him nothing is profitable unless it profits the whole of mankind. To secure this mutual profit it is necessary that all individuals should sacrifice their personal profits.’ That Mo-tzū sought love for its own sake and not for any profit it could bring him is clear from the fact that it brought him no profit, but only pain, and that he gladly embraced it. Liang Ch‘i-ch‘ao says again ‘if men had nailed him to a cross, he would certainly not have regretted it, but would have endured it with a smile.’ It was love that Mo-tzū taught, and love that merely seeks its own gain is not love.

The main criticisms launched against him were that his love was too all-embracing, and not that it was too calculating. We read that on one occasion when he was journeying from the state of Lu to the state of Ch‘i he met an old friend who said to him: ‘Nowadays there is none who practises righteousness; you alone at the cost of suffering practise it. You should give it

1 Cf. Chinese Philosophy in Classical Times, p. 45.
2 Cf. Chinese Political Thought, p. 102.
3 Quoted in Holth, Micius, p. 3.
up.' Whereupon Mo-tzu replied: 'There was a man who had ten sons, of whom one worked on the land while the other nine idled. The one who worked on the land, therefore, had to work all the harder. Why? Because there were many to feed and few to cultivate. Nowadays there is none who practises righteousness. You should therefore urge me on. Why should you stop me?' Here is no sordid seeking after profit.

Nor did Mo-tzu's first followers seek their own profit. Huai-Nan-tzu says he had a bodyguard of a hundred and eighty men, who would willingly go to death by fire or sword at his command, and Chuang-tzu assures us that the Ch'in Hua-li, to whom reference has been already made, shared his Master's self-sacrificing spirit. He says: 'The idea of Mo Tî and Khin Hwa-lî was good, but their practice was wrong. They would have made the Mohists of future ages feel it necessary to toil themselves, till there was not a hair on their legs, and still be urging one another on.' Moreover, the Lü Shih Ch'ün Ch'iu narrates the story of the heroic but futile self-sacrifice of Mo-tzu's successor as Chü-tzu and a hundred and eighty-three of his followers, 'actuated', as Williamson observes, 'by no other motive than fidelity to the principle of defending the oppressed'. Neither Mo-tzu nor his immediate followers were under any illusions about quick returns from the practice of love.

There was, indeed, an ascetic strain in his teaching and practice. Hsün-tzu complained that 'Mo-tzu's one-sided doctrine of utility made him ignore the significance of culture

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1 Mo-Tzu xlvii. Cf. Forke, op. cit., p. 551; Tomkinson, op. cit., p. 130; Mei, op. cit., p. 222.
2 Cf. Fung, op. cit., p. 82, where the passage is translated.
3 This is merely a different romanization of the name Ch'in Hua-li.
4 Chuang-tzu xxxiii, translation of Legge, Sacred Books of the East, xl, p. 221. Cf. Giles, Chuang-Tzu, p. 443; Wieger, Taoisme, ii, pp. 500 ff. (where the Chinese text is also given).
5 Cf. Lü Shih Ch'ün Ch'iu, XIX, iii. For German translation cf. Wilhelm, Frühling und Herbst des Lü Bu We, pp. 327 f. Cf. also Fung, op. cit., p. 83; Williamson, op. cit., pp. 25 f.; Waley, Three Ways of Thought, pp. 178 ff. (Fung and Williamson give the number as eighty-three; the Chinese text to which I have had access gives one hundred and eighty-three, and so Wilhelm and Waley.)
and refinement'.

This was because he advocated the severest economy in public and private expenditure, and especially in the matter of funerals, and opposed music. 'Whatever adds to expense', he said, 'but adds nothing to the profit of the people, the Sage-Kings did not countenance.' Or again, 'To cut out useless expenditure is to walk in the way of the Sage-Kings.' Whether in public or in private expenditure all that is merely ornamental he held to be waste, and advocated the severest economy and austerity. 'What are clothes for?' he asked. 'In winter to keep out the cold, in summer to keep out the heat. The test of good clothing is therefore whether it adds warmth in winter and coolness in summer. What is merely decorative but does not so add should be cut out.' He goes on to illustrate the same principle in regard to houses, boats and vehicles. Only the useful is the good, and all that is merely aesthetic is not useful.

Again it is only fair to see this against the background of his time, with the great social inequalities which faced him on every side. He saw labour that was urgently needed for the necessities of the many being dissipated on the luxuries of the few, and hence saw luxury as the enemy of the well-being of the people. Similarly in the context of idle rich he urged the importance of honest and unremitting toil in a way that would satisfy the most exacting of our modern politicians. 'Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might' would have delighted him as a motto. Everyone, be he statesman, judge or labourer, should not grudge a full day's labour. The rulers should devote themselves from morning till night to the duties of their office, the lesser officials to all the multitudinous tasks of administration, the farmers from the crack of dawn till sundown should toil in the fields with

1 Hsun-tzu xxi, translation quoted by Kennedy (Chinese Recorder, lxii, 1931, p. 696) without acknowledgement of its source. Dubs, loc. cit., has 'Micius was prejudiced towards utility and did not know the elegancies of life.'


5 Eccl. ix. 10.
unremitting diligence, and the women should rise betimes to spin and weave, and should continue their tasks till late at night.¹

All this was probably due to the conditions of the times, and did not mean that Mo-tzu thought that all luxury and ornament were wrong per se. Fung Yu-lan quotes from Liu Hsiang a story about Mo-tzu, which, if true, would show that he did not regard these things as inherently evil, but only relatively so compared with the more urgent needs. The story tells how Mo-tzu once in answer to a question said: ‘Suppose that in a year of bad times, someone wished to give you the pearl of the Marquis of Sui, yet would not allow you to sell it, but only to keep it as a valuable decoration. Or that he wished to give you a chung of grain. If you would get the pearl you would not get the grain, and vice versa. Then which would you choose?’ To which the reply came: ‘I would choose the grain, for with this I could rescue myself from my extremity.’ Mo-tzu replied: ‘Truly so. So then why strive after lavishness? The Sage does not hasten to exalt what is without use and to delight in frivolity and licence. Therefore one’s food should always be sufficient before one seeks to have it fine tasting; one’s clothing should always be warm before one tries to make it beautiful; and one’s dwelling should always be safe before one tries to make it pleasure giving. . . . To put what is fundamental first and external decoration secondary: this is what the Sage concerns himself with.’² Since this story comes from so late a time as the first century B.C., it cannot be accepted without reserve, though it probably rightly relates Mo-tzu’s austerity to the rigour of the times, when so many had not the bare necessities of life.

So was it also with his opposition to music. It was because music drew men from their labour that Mo-tzu opposed it. It is again only fair to point out that to say Mo-tzu was against music gives a false impression to the modern ear. ‘It should be remembered,’ says Yih, ‘that the term “Music” has here a much wider application than that generally understood. The term is applied to engravings, delicious food and beautiful houses. In

¹ Mo-tzu xxxii. Cf. Forke, op. cit., p. 370; Tomkinson, op. cit., p. 159; Mei, op. cit., p. 179.
Similarly Waley says: 'What Mo-tzu had in mind were elaborate and costly danced rituals, demanding expensive costumes, the maintenance of large companies of dancers and musicians, all of which were paid out of the public funds.'

It would be a better translation into modern idiom to say that he was against amusements, and that because they were a form of extravagance, breeding waste and idleness, and leading to selfishness. Nevertheless it remains true that life as Mo-tzu conceived it was a dreary business, and there was little millennial quality about the 'mutual conferring of benefits' that he called for. It consisted alone in a life of unceasing toil, without colour or relief, and rewarded by the barest necessities of existence. Liang Ch'i-ch'ao says 'Motze's opposition to music is like a man who builds a house but deplores the space within the walls as waste.'

Similarly Mo-tzu's demand for simplicity in funerals was born of his horror at all the waste imposed by the tyranny of funeral customs. He declaims against the customs of his day, with their costly coffins and periods of mourning extending to as much as three years, and declares that the funeral of a nobleman was calculated to empty the treasury of the state, and that of a peasant to reduce his family to poverty. His rule for funerals was: 'The coffin should be three inches thick, sufficient to hold the bones. The shroud should be of three pieces, sufficient to cover the flesh. The grave should not be of such a depth as to reach water, yet deep enough to ensure that no odours will arise. The mound should be just high enough to be identified. Weeping is permissible on the way to and from the interment, but then there should be a return to work to produce clothing and food.'

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2 Cf. Three Ways of Thought, p. 169.
3 Cf. Chinese Political Thought, p. 103.
4 De Groot (loc. cit., pp. 666-682) gives the text of the chapter on Economy in Funeral Rites, together with a translation. This is the earliest translation of this chapter into any European language.
But custom is hard to defy, and Mencius tells us that even Mo-tzu’s disciples who continued his teaching had not strength to put them into practice. We read: ‘The Mohist, I Chih, sought, through Hsü Pi, to see Mencius . . . Mencius said . . . ‘I have heard that this I is a Mohist. Now Mo considers that in the regulation of funeral matters a spare simplicity should be the rule. I thinks with Mo’s doctrines to change the customs of the kingdom—how does he regard them as if they were wrong, and not honour them? Notwithstanding his views, I buried his parents in a sumptuous manner, and so he served them in the way which his doctrines discountenance.’

Of Mo-tzu’s own sincerity and consistency there can be no doubt, however, and it is clear that the frugality and asceticism that he both practised and inculcated was not born of a dour spirit that loved asceticism for its own sake, or that sought to mortify the flesh, but rather of his eagerness for service and his recognition of the claims of others.

Passing over other aspects of the teaching of this sage, including his political theory which has reminded modern authors of the ‘social contract’ theory, we must look finally at the religious element in his thought. Hu Shih says he is the only Chinese who can truly be said to have founded a religion, and Wieger that he is the only Chinese writer of whom one can suppose that he believed in God. His term for God is Heaven—a term which is already found frequently on the lips of Confucius. But Confucius was certainly not profoundly religious, and Mo-tzu seems to fill the term with more content than he did. It is true that

3 Development of Logical Method, p. 57.
4 Cf. Histoire des Croyances, p. 207 = E.T., p. 207) : ‘Le seul écrivain chinois dont on puisse penser qu’il crut en Dieu, le seul apôtre de la charité et chevalier du droit que la Chine ait produit.’ Granet (La pensée chinoise, p. 492 n.) comments on this: ‘Dans ce dithyrambe imprudent, il y a, pour le moins, quelque légèreté.’ Hoang Tsen-yue (op. cit., p. 95) adopts Wieger’s words and even goes beyond him: ‘Mo tseu ou Mécius est, avant Jésus, le seul apôtre de l’altruisme et le plus grand chevalier du droit qu’ait produit le monde.’
there are passages which indicate that Confucius thought of Heaven as a conscious and purposive power that was cognizant of human affairs,¹ but his belief in God was not the spring of life for him. He preferred to keep at a respectful distance from God and to let the world of the spiritual be left as far as possible out of his conversation.² With Mo-tzu, however, it is otherwise. His appeal is frequently to the will of Heaven. Aggressive war is condemned because it is contrary to the will of Heaven,³ and to love all men is declared to be but obedience to the same will.⁴ Moreover, Heaven not alone wills that men should love, but exemplifies that love. For Heaven loves the whole world, and proves that love by visiting with calamity those who sin against their fellows.⁵ For Mo-tzu firmly held the view that all sin of man against man is yet more profoundly sin against Heaven.

It is not without interest to observe that in his thought the divine punishment of human wickedness is an expression of the love of Heaven. In this he is at one with Old Testament prophets, with whom he has, not surprisingly, been compared.⁶ When Amos said in the name of God: 'You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore will I visit upon you your iniquities',⁷ he perceived that a God who was indifferent to human sin would not be a God of love. And Mo-tzu perceived the same truth.

From this it is clear that for him Heaven is personal. Rawlinson observes: 'Micius seems to have conceived of T'ien'⁸

¹ Cf. what I have written in the Bulletin of the John Rylands Library, xxiv, 1940, p. 337.
² Cf. Analects viii. 20: 'To give oneself earnestly to the duties due to men, while respecting spiritual beings, to keep aloof from them, may be called wisdom' (translation of Legge, The Chinese Classics, i, 2nd ed., p. 191); Analects vii. 20: 'The subjects on which the Master did not talk were extraordinary things, feats of strength, disorder, and spiritual beings' (translation of Legge, ibid., p. 201).
⁶ Cf. Wallace, Chinese Recorder, lxii, 1931, p. 559: 'His emphasis on the doctrine of righteousness is comparable to that given it in the old Testament.' Wilhelm compares Mo-tzu to Savonarola (Die chinesischen Literatur, p. 56).
⁷ Amos iii. 2.
⁸ I.e. Heaven.
as a person though he does not explicitly say so. He did, however, refer to him in personalistic terms. T'ien is, for instance, interested in the welfare of men.' In my view this could be stated with much more emphasis. The Heaven that is marked by a loving will, and that cherishes a moral purpose, and that not alone makes high demands of men but exemplifies the qualities it asks of them, is no mere impersonal force, but a living and personal Power.  

This would seem to be implied too, by Mo-tzu's vigorous opposition to any belief in blind, impersonal Fate. 'Fatalism is disastrous to the world' he said. He urged that, instead of supposing their misfortunes were due to the whims of Fate, men should recognize that there was a moral Power behind the universe. 'He who obeys the will of Heaven', we read, 'entering into the universal mutual love (chien hsiang ai) and the mutual conferring of benefits (chiao hsiang li), will obtain rewards, while he who resists the will of Heaven, being moved with a discriminating mutual hatred (pieh hsiang wu) and the mutual doing of injury (chiao hsiang tsé), will incur punishment. Heaven is therefore righteous, and the will of Heaven for man is that he should do righteousness.  

1 Cf. Chinese Recorder, lxiii, 1932, p. 95.  
2 Cf. Williamson, op. cit., p. 35: 'In fact, it would seem that the personal interpretation is the only one which meets the case'; Wilhelm, Die chinesischen Literatur, p. 57: 'Sein Glaube an einen persönlichen Gott': Forke, Mé Ti, p. 40: 'Der Himmel ist für Mé Ti das höchste Wesen, Gott... Mé-tse sieht im Himmel nicht nur das sich über uns ausbreitende Himmelsgewölbe mit den Gestirnen, sondern ein anthropomorphes Wesen': Krause, Ju-Tao-Fo, 1924, p. 89: 'Die oberste Kraft des Himmels erhält bei Mo Ti einen neuen Sinn, nicht nur als unpersönliche Naturgewalt, sondern als ein höchstes Wesen im Sinne, eines allmächtigen Gottes': Witte, Mé Ti, p. 11: 'Vom Himmel selbst und seinem Wirken wird bei Mé Ti in solchen Ausdrücken geredet, dass man fast zu dem Urteil kommen könnte, der Himmel sei nach Mé Ti eine persönliche Gottheit, ähnlich wie in den ältesten, chinesischen heiligen Schriften von der obersten Gottheit, Schang-ti, gesprochen wird.' Witte, however, holds that Mo-tzu was a pantheist, rather than a theist (ibid.).  
Heaven is therefore as compasses to the wheelwright, and the square to the carpenter.¹

It seems therefore surprising that many modern writers depreciate Mo-tzū as a religious teacher. De Rosny set him down as a very mediocre teacher, and went on to declare that it could not be otherwise with a thinker who appears to have been devoid of any idea of God.² Similarly Alexandra David found Mo-tzū’s Heaven to be a pale substitute for God.³ Others have maintained that his Heaven was but a lay figure to be clothed with his own ideas. Mei reaches the conclusion that ‘with Motze religion is functional and social, and an organic part of his ethics’⁴ and that he ‘personified social values for their preservation and enhancement. He threw a religious halo around his fundamental ethical convictions, and lifted his doctrines to the commanding position of creeds.’⁵ Similarly Wallace: ‘Motse’s argument is always a utilitarianism, and the thing is then given an additional reference to Heaven, which is so nominal that the argument is not strengthened by it.’⁶

All this seems to me to be much less than fair to Mo-tzū, and to rest on an exaggerated emphasis on his utilitarianism and a gross under-estimate of his teaching of Heaven. Mei observes that ‘what Heaven desires is just what Motse has been teaching himself’.⁷ But how could it be otherwise? If Mo-tzū believed

¹ Mo-tzū xxvi. Cf. Forke, op. cit., p. 320; Tomkinson, op. cit., p. 87; Mei, op. cit., p. 140.
³ Cf. op. cit., p. 142: ‘Si l’on nous y propose l’imitation du Ciel “ dont les dons généreux se répandent sur tous ” c’est uniquement pour nous donner un haut exemple, celui de la nature et nous ne pourrions, quelque désir que nous en ayons, rien y trouver qui ressemble au commandement d’une Puissance supérieure.’
⁷ Cf. Motse, Rival of Confucius, p. 149.
that in the will of God was the supreme law for man, then he would necessarily set forth what he believed to be the content of that will. It can scarcely be maintained that he would have proved himself more truly religious if he had said 'The will of Heaven is one thing, but what I advocate is another'!

It is true that he emphasizes only certain sides of religion. He is not much interested in the forms of worship. But neither were the Old Testament prophets. Yet they are allowed to have been religious teachers. Mo-tzü accepts the current forms, but with something of the spirit of the prophets he demands that those forms should be validated by obedience to the will of God in daily life. In his day he found hollow sacrifices being offered. Says Fung: 'The Confucian school, or at least a part of it, did not believe in the existence of supernatural beings, yet at the same time stressed the performance of sacrifice in order to give emotional satisfaction. Looked at from the point of view of Mohist utilitarianism, performance of sacrifices under such circumstances is meaningless.'

Mo-tzü himself said: 'To hold that there are no spirits and yet to learn the sacrificial rites is like refusing to entertain a guest and yet studying the forms of hospitality, or like denying the existence of fish and yet making a fishing net.'

Mo-tzü's emphasis is not on the forms of religion, because he did not think the urgent need of the world was for a reform of those forms, but for a life which conformed to the will of God and a character that reflected God's love.

As a religious teacher he is to be criticized rather in that his Heaven is too remote. His character and will are made known to men, but His fellowship is not offered them as the living fountain of their strength to obey His will. Mo-tzü himself did not come to men with a 'Thus saith the Lord', proclaiming a word which he had received in the immediacy of fellowship with God. Nor does he call upon men to love God with a love that responds to His own. As a religious teacher he is cold and rational. Yet that should not make us withhold from him appreciation of the greatness of his spirit and of the loftiness of his teaching. God hath

not left Himself without witness amongst men of many races, and though we may find their witness to be 'by divers portions and in divers manners' we may honour their memory for their greatness. Few amongst them attained the heights of self-sacrifice and unselfishness that Mo-tzū attained, and none was more earnest in his desire for a world in which the will of God should be perfectly done. His conception of that world was forbidding and unlovely, in that it was a comfortless world of unceasing toil, and he insufficiently recognized the place of the natural relationships of men. In both respects his over-emphasis finds its justification in the setting of his times, and if Mo-tzū can scarcely be thought of as the universal teacher for all ages, he can be recognized to have been a teacher whose message was urgently needed in his own day. Perhaps that is why his words filled the empire in his own age, and then suffered neglect.