

SeeVoun Mullings

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### Is Mozi Justified in Believing The Ghost Exists?

In Philip J. Ivanhoe and Bryan W. Van Norden's, "Readings in Classical Chinese Philosophy," in chapter two, Mozi argues that ghosts must exist because, essentially, they help make us better people. I agree with his argument because oftentimes than not people require a set of limitations that would offer rewards and penalties for every action committed.

In chapter 12 of "Readings in Classical Chinese Philosophy," Mozi states that people indulge in violence, thievery, and rebellion, and children do not respect their elders. This is due to their failure to understand that spirits and ghosts exist to regulate human behavior. As Mozi says, ghosts and spirits have the power to punish the wicked and reward the good. Mozi also states that if there are accounts of people seeing and hearing ghosts then people need to accept that they exist. When asked who can offer testimony to the existence of ghosts, Mozi replies that the story of Du Bo is a good example of why ghosts exist. Du Bo's spirit haunted his master King Xuan and killed him three years after his death. Mozi says that spirits and ghosts are consciously aware of their acts and they will punish anyone who murders an innocent.

Mozi argues that ghosts must exist due to evidence from testimonies, stories, and the three sage kings. The story of Du Bo states that when people die a violent, untimely death they come back as vengeful spirits. Oral stories and stories about past accounts of ghosts can cause people to fear them; therefore, they would cause people to do good deeds as opposed to bad

things. Further evidence pertaining to the existence of ghosts outside of the Mohist's perspective is within Christian belief. For example, Christians are advised to stay away from ghosts; however, some turn to mediumship and spirits to ask about their future (Isaiah 8:19). As a follower of Christianity, I believe that ghosts exist. Perhaps not in the same exact way Mohists do, but I do believe that when we die our souls are bound to go somewhere. Sometimes souls have unfinished business and cannot cross to the afterlife.

Also, while I have not personally experienced a ghost, I believe they exist due to historical and modern accounts of seeing and hearing spirits. Not only oral accounts exist but also historical as said in the Zhoung dynasty writings called the "Elegies." The "Elegies," describe the afterlife experience of King Wen and how he is able to move to the left and right of the Lord. Overall, I believe that the reasoning behind why people believe in ghosts and other supernatural beings is because people/societies need a reason to bring order to their lives. For example, Mohists believe that ghosts are the beings that judge a person's actions; if a person is good they are rewarded, but if they are bad then they are punished. The same goes for Christians, if a person is good and devout to God, they will go to heaven. However, if a person is bad and commits to a life of sin, then they will go to hell.

The reason why a person may object to my response to Mozi's belief is that the story of Gu Bo was stated to have no witnesses. Therefore, if there were no witnesses to witness Gu Bo's ghost, then it fails to be true. In fact, the story of Zhong Lijao also did not have witnesses. My opposition may ask how reliable the evidence is if the accounts of ghosts are based on people that did not witness the scene. Also, just because someone believes that a supernatural being exists to ensure the goodness of humans is not grounds for its existence to be true. They might argue from the perspective of Edmund L. Gettier and state that S that knows P, P is true, S

believes that P and S is justified in believing that P. People that support Gettier's argument may say that while an individual may know the essence of ghosts and in their opinion ghosts exist; therefore it's true. However, they have no proof or background evidence about the existence of ghosts. For example, if a person is debating the existence of ghosts and believes they exist, but lack evidence then their opponent will unlikely believe the existence of ghosts without proof. Also, an atheist that does not believe in any ideology may argue that an individual can act humanely without needing any outside supernatural being to guide them. An individual can do good deeds and be a good person without religious or philosophical writings that command them to do so. Punishment is an incentive to be good and rewards influence people to be good. Overall, an individual can have morals without requiring texts and commands telling them to do so. Also, an individual will not believe in an idea without evidence about whether that belief is true.

Although there were not any witnesses to view the existence of ghosts, there is evidence within the death of whom Du Bo killed. Du Bo died from being brutally murdered; therefore, he came back as a vengeful spirit to kill his master. Perhaps the reasoning behind why Du Bo's ghost was not seen by witnesses is due to them being deemed good by Du Bo's spirit. Also, if there were someone else that killed King Xuan of Zhou (Du Bo's master) they would easily have been caught because there were several thousand men in the woods at the time. The ghost of Du Bo would be the only answer to who killed King Xuan of Zhou. My opponent also uses the argument of Edmund L. Gettier and states that S knows P, P is true, S believes that P, and S is justified in believing that P. There may not be much visual evidence that ghosts exist; however, there are many oral stories, testimonies, and statements made by the three sage kings that prove the existence of ghosts. There is evidence dating back to the 8th century of the Zhou dynasty.

Thus, the belief in the existence of ghosts has existed for centuries and is not a new modern theory created by philosophers and scientists. People are justified in believing that ghosts exist if there are long oral histories and written testimonies about the account. As for the argument from an atheist's perspective, regardless, of religion or philosophical concepts humans need reasoning as to why they should be good people. For Mohists' it's ghosts and for Christians it's God, but for those that do not follow a religion or philosophy they are bound by laws created by human society to ensure they act humanely.

Overall, Mozi and I have similar views about ghosts existing because they make us better people. As previously stated, Mozi argues ghosts exist on the grounds that there is evidence from testimonies, stories, and the three sage kings. However, I argue that while there is evidence of ghosts existing from a Mohists point of view there is also evidence that ghost exists from a Christian point of view as well. Therefore, the belief in ghosts is from more than one group of people's perspectives. Although there are some people who do not believe in the existence of ghosts, they could further research the accounts of people seeing ghosts to gain some perspective from the opposing point of view. In conclusion, people need reasoning as to why they should be better people. Thus, Mohists believe that ghosts will punish the guilty and reward the innocent.

## Citations

Ivanhoe, Philip J., and Van Norden Bryan William. *Readings in Classical Chinese Philosophy*. Hackett Publ., 2007.