Mo Di (Master Mo – ca.470-380 BCE) was a figure of critical importance in the development of early Chinese philosophy. He, and the school that followed him, provided the first significant alternative to Confucianism. Moreover, they introduced reasoned argument to the presentation of philosophical doctrines, and the beginnings of speculation on such subjects as language, epistemology, logic and science. To understand later Confucians like Mencius and Xun Zi it is essential to know what the Mohists said and how the Later Mohists responded in the ongoing debates.

In this talk Dr. Johnson shall give a brief account of what is known about Mo Di and his school, and a more full account of the work attributed to him, including readings from each of the sections.

Throughout his career as an eminent neurosurgeon Dr Ian Johnston, AM pursued a life-long passion with ancient languages, completing a PhD in Chinese at the University of Sydney. Since retiring from medical practice Dr Johnson has devoted himself solely to literary pursuits – in particular, translations from Chinese and Classical Greek. His recently published English translation of the entire Mozi is the first bilingual edition in any European language to be published in the West. In May 2011 he was awarded the NSW Premier’s Translation Prize and the Pen Medallion.