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## Research on the Theoretical Causes and Value of Moral Paradox

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### Abstract

Human beings have been paying attention to moral paradox for a long time, especially in recent decades, moral paradox has been highly valued and studied by more and more scholars. Moral paradox, as a special logical contradiction in the real world of human life, is the spiritual product of human practice. Many years' research in the academic circle has shown that moral paradox is not a single paradox. On the contrary, moral paradox is a kind of paradox involving human moral problems and the category of value choice. The scope of moral paradox research is very wide, and ethics, law, logic and other disciplines are involved. The in-depth study of moral paradox can not only help improve people's ability of value judgment and value selection, but also inspire us to further explore the complexity of scientific knowledge objects and overcome the limitations of cognitive subjects, develop theoretical innovation of paradox, broaden the research vision of related disciplines, and promote interdisciplinary research.

**Keywords:** morality; moral paradox; spiritual civilization; fundamental problems

## **1. Introduction**

Moral paradox is a kind of unique contradiction existing in human real life world. In a special situation, people make the contradictory result of the same behavior based on the intention of different value judgments and value choices. And this result often has the contradictory nature of right and wrong, good and evil, beauty and ugliness. However, it is precisely because of the mysterious charm of moral paradox that many excellent scholars at home and abroad have devoted themselves to its research. In the past few decades of academic research, moral paradox has gradually become an interdisciplinary research topic in the fields of ethics, logic, law and so on. With the unremitting efforts of many scholars at home and abroad, academic achievements related to moral paradox have sprung up like mushrooms. These academic research achievements have broadened our vision, broken our inherent concepts, and brought profound life enlightenment to our readers.

The study of moral paradox has become an attractive philosophical topic in contemporary academic circles. Although the existing research results are remarkable, scholars at home and abroad pay more attention to the contradictory nature, phenomenon research, classification types, theoretical significance and other philosophical thinking topics of moral paradox, and rarely focus on the moral norms and the construction of spiritual civilization in real life. The proposal of the solution is slightly insufficient, so that a series of moral problems contrary to Chinese traditional culture have appeared in the historical process of mankind, but effective solutions cannot be implemented in time, which makes the theoretical research and practical application of moral paradox seriously disconnected. This paper attempts to study the basic problems of moral paradox, in order to contribute to the construction of human spiritual civilization.

## **2. Research on the basic problems of moral paradox**

Clarifying the basic problems of moral paradox is the basis of the study of moral paradox and the path of solving paradox, and it is also the most fundamental and important first step of this paper. Since the development of economic globalization, human material life has also been greatly improved, but at the same time, human beings are also facing great challenges in terms of ethics. There have been many phenomena of "moral anomie" and "moral decline". For these moral problems, human beings lack rational consciousness and do not form a correct understanding of the widespread existence of moral paradox. Therefore, it is particularly

important to clarify the basic problems of moral paradox and help people recognize the real situation of the widespread existence of moral paradox.

## **2.1 Definition of moral paradox**

Moral paradox is a practical spiritual product in the process of political, economic and cultural exchanges in human society. It refers to the contradictory conflict between human behavior choice and value realization. The academia calls it the practical paradox. The moral paradox is the same as the paradox in the general sense that we discuss everyday. The logical contradiction it contains is neither the contradiction of the unity of opposites that dialectical materialists talk about, nor the "pure subjective" thinking contradiction that idealists talk about in human brain. It is a special paradox between good and evil in the practice of human social life.

## **2.2 The causes of moral paradox**

The analysis of the causes of moral paradox phenomenon is the basic work of the study of moral paradox theory and solution path. Only by deeply understanding the causes of moral paradox phenomenon can we better solve the moral paradox. The causes of moral paradox are as follows:

First, the practical subject's quality and the ability to recognize and judge value have the limitations of "inborn deficiency". The main performance is that there is a huge gap between the value goal of the subject's behavior choice and the realistic value goal. Of course, cognitive value is not equal to knowing truth. Truth is an epistemological concept and the correct reflection of human beings on the objective world. Every step forward in understanding is close to the objective world of infinite development. With the improvement of human cognitive ability, the true nature of the objective world will one day be revealed by human beings. But when human beings recognize and judge the value, the object to be recognized and judged does not exist completely independent of the subject, it is the link between the subject and the object. The standard of judging whether the value cognition is correct or not completely depends on the subjective needs of the subject or the "usefulness" of the subjective aspect, rather than the "practice" of the objective aspect and the actual situation of the object. Therefore, it will make the subject mix their own subjective thoughts of "self-centered" and preconceived in the process of value cognition and judgment, and cause people to blind their eyes in the process of value selection and realization, resulting in the embarrassing situation of "good intentions" doing bad things.

Second, it is deeply influenced by the traditional ethics of virtue spirit and culture. There is a common "criticism" in the spiritual culture of Chinese and Western moralism, that is, in order to promote the orthodoxy and authority of the national and regional culture, the ontology of the theory of good human nature is often forcibly integrated with their own political and moral theories, regardless of whether this ontology of "good human nature" is really compatible with the national and regional culture. In order to prove his theory of benevolent government, Mencius, a philosopher in the pre Qin period of China, put forward the abstract theory of innate moral goodness. Mencius lived in the middle of the Warring States period. The emperor of Zhou lost power, and the princes competed endlessly for hegemony. The annexation of small countries by large countries also occurred from time to time. At this time, the social atmosphere was very bad. Mencius hoped to change this political situation, so he put forward the theory of "good nature", and told the world that everyone's nature is good. As long as we strictly abide by the etiquette, don't learn bad things, and don't be assimilated by the bad social atmosphere, we won't get bad. But this is just a kind of good faith deception and self hypnosis. This kind of moral ontology thought of "good human nature" is just our beautiful assumption and pursuit. Later generations' kings mostly rule the country by virtue, vigorously advocate the use of moral power to influence the people, and teach people to be good. Their starting points are all good, and they also maintain the stability of political power. However, it is easy to ignore the social moral environment, and it is easy to cause some "villains" to take advantage of virtue to make profits for themselves. The harm of virtue doctrine lies in that it is easy to ignore the social moral environment in the process of guiding the subject to make behavioral value judgments and choices. With the thinking set of "pushing oneself to others" and "comparing one's heart to another", it is easy to let the "villain" who likes to take advantage of others profit while pursuing the realization of their own moral values.

Third, in the process of social moral education, there is a lack of the cultivation and training of the subject's moral wisdom. So far, due to the lack of moral wisdom education, there have been a series of disharmonious contradictions in our current society. In the practice of moral behavior choice, if we want to achieve the moral result of good, the subject must not only have good moral motivation, but also have superb moral wisdom. In the previous article, we discussed whether the elderly should be helped when they fell down. The Chinese nation has a vast history of five thousand years. Respecting the old and caring for the young is our traditional virtue. Now more and more people are afraid to help the elderly who fall down,

because they are afraid that in case the elderly who are helped up not only do not thank themselves, but also the elderly or their families may blackmail themselves for money, resulting in what we often call "helping the elderly phobia". We often say that helping people is the root of happiness, and helping the elderly who fall to the ground is what every Chinese citizen should do without hesitation. However, we are worried that good intentions will not be rewarded (good deeds will lead to bad results), so many people are always at a loss and hesitant in the face of this situation. We can't ignore the fact that the old man fell to the ground, but the method of saving people must be scientific. At this time, we can use moral wisdom to resolve contradictions. First of all, we can find people around us and ask them to help together. Then we should contact the hospital and the elderly's family members at the first time. In this process, we should use mobile phones to take photos or videos of the elderly falling to the ground, our approach, guarding the elderly, and calling an ambulance. With these photos or videos of helping others, we don't have to worry about blackmail by people with ulterior motives. Once a person has moral wisdom, it is just like a sailboat lost in the vast sea with a beacon to guide us to the mainland.

### **2.3 Characteristics of moral paradox**

Throughout the ages, the fact that moral paradoxes are widespread and the improvement of human moral civilization due to social development is actually the result of society and mankind walking out of the strange circle of moral paradoxes together. We lack rational knowledge and have not formed the overall consciousness and cognitive system of moral paradoxes. In the theoretical system of logical thinking and moral society construction, there is a lack of analysis of the characteristics of moral paradox, which leads to the lack of philosophical thinking and the establishment of moral theory mechanism in the process of eliminating moral paradox. Therefore, clarifying the characteristics of moral paradox and clarifying the phenomenon of moral paradox can not only help us recognize the real situation of the confusion of moral paradox in today's society, but also promote the improvement of personal moral quality and the establishment of a moral society. The characteristics of moral paradox can be divided into the following points:

First, it is practical or factual. Moral paradox is not the product of thinking in the field of human cognition. Although its formation is inextricably linked with our thinking and cognitive confusion, it is the product of human practical spirit. With the vigorous development of the global market economy, human modernization has made brilliant achievements, and people's living standards have been greatly improved. However, in the

field of ethics, we are facing a series of problems, such as moral anomie, moral decline, moral dilemma, moral contradiction, moral crisis and so on. And this series of problems are generated in practice. Especially in recent decades, there have been fierce ideological collisions and contradictions between the traditional Chinese ethical ideas and the new ethical ideas with the help of the spring breeze of reform and opening up, as well as the ethical and moral ideas of the capitalist society with the "Introduction" of reform and opening up. Since moral paradox originates from social practice, in the process of researching and exploring the phenomenon of moral paradox, we should not only be limited to the methods, steps and formal calculus of reasoning, demonstration and proof of logical paradox, but also scientifically understand and grasp the current situation and laws of the phenomenon world of moral paradox from the perspective of practice. As the saying goes, practice is the only standard for testing truth. These moral paradoxes arising from the practice of human social interaction must also be explained, studied and solved in social practice. The practical turn of moral paradox research should be to construct the logic of moral practice and guide human beings and society to carry out moral practice activities on the basis of "ethics" and "logic". From the perspective of theory, the practical characteristics of moral paradox show "moral choice" and "non moral choice". "Moral choice" is the behavior choice of the subject starting from the good idea and having a very clear moral value goal. According to the different subjects of "moral choice", the practice of moral paradox has turned to two different research perspectives: social choice and individual choice. The research of social choice mainly includes moral education, moral evaluation and charity activities. The study of individual choice mainly refers to the phenomenon of moral paradox caused by individual moral judgment and behavior choice in the process of moral practice. The so-called "immoral choice" refers to the practice of people's daily communication behavior. In many cases, some behavior choices and judgments of society and people are not necessarily considered from the moral level, but the results of such behavior choices and judgments are inseparable from ethics and morality, and there will be self contradictory results of good and evil.

Second, self contradiction. Moral paradox is a special self contradiction established between the practice of subjective behavior choice and the objective world. Of course, the self contradiction in the phenomenon of moral paradox is very different from the law of the unity of opposites declared by materialist dialectics. The law of the unity of opposites revealed in materialist dialectics refers to the attribute of interdependence and struggle between the two sides of the contradiction, and the two sides of the contradiction can transform to the opposite

under certain conditions. However, the self contradictory good and evil in the phenomenon of moral paradox are not interdependent and struggle with each other, and they can not be transformed in the same time and space. Therefore, the moral paradox strictly abides by the logical laws in logic. In the same moral paradox case, the result of the subject's practical choice of a certain behavior and the realization of moral value is that good and evil coexist at the same time. When acknowledging good, evil must also be acknowledged, and when negating good, evil must also be denied. In addition, moral paradox is the contradiction between the motivation or original intention of behavior and the result of value realization. That is, what we usually call planting good causes, producing evil results, planting evil causes, producing good results.

Third, concealment. The good and evil of the moral paradox are characterized by concealment in a specific time and space. It is like a veiled girl, and it is difficult for people to see her true face. From the perspective of social moral evaluation and social value expectation, the main reason why the moral paradox shows the hidden characteristics is that people's evaluation or expectation of a thing has always focused on the motivation of the subject's judgment and choice rather than the effect. These motivational theorists believe that the basis for evaluating the good and evil of a behavior can only be the motivation of the actor. Kant is a typical representative of this motivation theory. He advocates that the good of moral behavior is entirely derived from the good will of the actor. This kind will does not care about the actual effect or influence caused by the subject's judgment and choice. It only focuses on whether the subject's behavior motivation absolutely complies with the moral laws, Even those who advocate the unity of motivation and outcome focus on motivation rather than outcome when encountering events related to moral evaluation. Since ancient times, the Chinese people have a good character of being willing to help others. Sometimes we may help others out of kindness, but the result may backfire. We may fail to do things, but we may help others and make others unhappy. But others also know that the person who helps him is not completely sure of the overall situation of the matter, so there will be a situation of "doing bad things with good intentions". Therefore, in most cases, people will choose to forgive, and when the subject chooses to help others, it will generally boast of "carrying forward the spirit of Lei Feng", so that when the practice subject finds that his behavior choice and value realization have already appeared this kind of morality of "planting good causes and reaping evil consequences". Paradox phenomenon, will also turn a blind eye, pretending not to see paradox phenomenon. In addition, some news media are keen to publicize some so-called "positive

images" to the public, misleading the public to understand the truth, and ultimately leading to the "evil consequences" of the moral paradox phenomenon being buried.

### **3. The value of moral paradox research**

First, it is conducive to strengthening the theoretical construction of paradox and promoting the cross research of related disciplines. Ethical and moral issues have always been a hot topic in academic research. Ethics, logic and law are all involved in moral issues, but due to the limitations of the discipline, they are only superficial. Ethics takes moral phenomenon as the research object, mainly discusses the definition of morality, moral norms, moral essence, moral and economic interest conflict and other related issues, and also puts forward some reference schemes for solving the actual moral contradictions, but most of the reference schemes are only from the pure moral level, which is too idealistic for the resolution of moral paradox. Scholars in the field of law have also mentioned the moral paradox, but the main reason for the paradox of law is the contradiction caused by the inconsistency between the interpretation of the law and the provisions of the written law. Therefore, most scholars in the field of law pay more attention to the normative interpretation of the law, and do not solve the existing moral paradox from the practical level, so there is a tendency of scholasticization in the resolution of the paradox. Although the logic circle regards paradox as a very important research direction, most scholars are more interested in discussing the basic problems of truth theory paradox, paradox history, logical paradox and paradox in mathematics, but the research on moral paradox is slightly insufficient. Although some scholars have proposed that paradoxes should be studied in an interdisciplinary way, they still have not attracted much attention from the academic community. Therefore, from the current situation of the above disciplines, it shows that the study of moral paradox can not only encourage us to further explore the complexity of the object of scientific knowledge and overcome the limitations of the cognitive subject, develop theoretical innovation of paradox, but also broaden the research vision of related disciplines and promote interdisciplinary research.

Second, it is conducive to improving people's ability of value judgment and value selection. In the process of the development of human society and history, the development of ethical and moral thought has relative independence. The relative independence of ethical and moral thought means that ethics and morality have their own initiative and unique development law while reflecting and being determined by social economy. The development of ethical and



moral thought and social economy development do not completely keep the same balance. Sometimes, ethical and moral thoughts go beyond the current situation of economic development, and sometimes lag behind the development and changes of social economy. When the existing ethical and moral thoughts lag behind the development and changes of social economy, a series of moral paradoxes or moral problems will occur. These moral paradoxes or moral problems often confuse people's hearing and hearing in the form of illusion or lie, so that people can't correctly distinguish the true image of things and cause ideological confusion. This requires us to deeply study the causes of these moral paradoxes or moral problems and put forward some beneficial solutions, so as to help people make better value judgments and value choices when facing moral paradoxes or moral problems in real life.

Third, it is conducive to promoting the construction of human spiritual civilization and carrying forward the excellent traditional virtues of mankind. With the vigorous development of human economic globalization, at the same time, there are some contradictions that conflict with the construction of a harmonious society. For example, we often discuss the question of whether the elderly should be helped when they fall down. Respecting the elderly and caring for the young has been a traditional virtue of the Chinese nation since ancient times. Mencius also said, "I am old, and I am old; I am young, and I am young." We should help the elderly when they fall to the ground, which is also the basic moral cultivation of every citizen of our society. However, since the Peng Yu incident in Nanjing and the Li Kai incident in Zhengzhou, many people have questioned this kind of courageous and helpful behavior. It seems to be a simple question, but it is testing each of us' moral sentiment and moral standards. Seeing it, if you don't help or save it, your conscience is uneasy; But if you reach out for help, but you are afraid that if you give yourself trouble, you will end up with no reward for your kindness, so you have to avoid it. However, those rescued elderly people and their families did not know how to be grateful for their kindness, but they often returned their kindness and money in the community. Therefore, this vicious circle is created, and everyone is in danger. At present, the world is in a new era of great changes that has not been seen in a century. The vigorous development of the global market economy is bound to produce new moral problems. Therefore, strengthening the research on the theory of moral paradox and the path of solving paradox is the only way to promote the construction of human spiritual civilization and carry forward the excellent traditional virtues of mankind.

## 4. Conclusion

As a hot issue, the study of moral paradox has attracted more and more attention in the academic community in recent decades. Although mankind has a civilization history of thousands of years, the phenomena of moral decline, moral anomie and moral dilemma in human society still occur frequently. Therefore, the study of moral paradox and its resolution has reached the point of urgency. The study of moral paradox can not only help people improve their moral wisdom, but also broaden the research vision of related disciplines and promote the construction of related disciplines. In order to solve the problem of moral paradox, many scholars have put forward their own solutions. However, as the phenomenon of moral paradox is gradually formed and developed by society and people in the process of moral value and realization, from the theoretical level, moral paradox essentially belongs to the category of moral practice. Due to the complex background and causes of some moral paradoxes, there is a complex situation of moral paradox that "different people have different opinions", and moral paradox is a very special kind of paradox. It involves not only logic, but also ethics, law and other disciplines. It is a cross research topic in many fields. So far, there has not been formed in the academic community. A complete set of mature solutions to moral paradox. Therefore, the author combs the basic problems of moral paradox in detail, hoping to further promote the research on the resolution of moral paradox.

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