Research on Philosophical Theories Related to Moral Paradox and the Path of Solving the Tram Problem

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Abstract

Moral paradox is a special contradiction in the world of moral phenomena, which is a result that appears in behavioral choices and has an absolute opposition and antagonistic nature between good and evil. The manifestation of the opposition between good and evil in the process of appropriate implementation of behavior choices. This article explores some philosophical theories related to moral paradoxes, excavates some philosophical theories related to moral paradoxes, reviews the case of the trolley problem, conducts research on the solution path of moral paradoxes, and applies theoretical results to practice. It can not only clarify the development process of moral paradoxes, but also reveal the essence and laws of their development, effectively improving people's moral literacy.

Key words: moral paradox; philosophical theory; trolley problem; resolving contradiction path

1. Introduction

The society we live in today is a modern society with material security. In such a society, if we only focus on the good and evil of moral subject value judgments and behavioral choices without a deep understanding of the system of moral value judgments and behavioral choices, it will be difficult to achieve our beautiful wish of building a moral society. In the real world, people are inevitably in a certain social and historical environment. In such a historical environment, people cannot become atomic individuals. People have complex social relationships, and they have deeply understood that if they only emphasize ethical norms and moral obligations, but do not pay attention to moral personality and moral value evaluation system, they will lose the tradition of virtues and annihilate people's pursuit of truth, goodness, and beauty. So this article explores the solution to the trolley problem through the philosophical theory of moral paradox, hoping to regulate people's behavior and maintain social fairness and justice.

2. Philosophical theories related to moral paradoxes

2.1 Egoism

The egoistic moral philosophy holds that "the ultimate goal of all human behavior is self-interest." Egoism is considered synonymous with selfishness in most contexts, and the egoistic theory in moral paradoxes advocates individual self-interest and the pursuit of maximizing personal interests. This theory holds that individuals should be self-centered, and egoists believe that all selfish behavior is reasonable because selfishness is a natural instinct of human beings. The value of human life is to pursue fame and fortune, and one can do anything to obtain benefits.

The philosopher Yang Zhu of the pre Qin period in China once proposed the idea of "for oneself", and the modern bourgeois philosopher Hobbes also demonstrated the ethical viewpoint of "if one does not act for oneself, heaven and earth will destroy" from the perspective of abstract human nature theory. Modern ethicists divide egoism into psychological egoism and ethical egoism. Scholars who hold the view of psychological selfishness generally believe that self-interest is the inherent nature of human existence. People only consider their own interests when making value judgments and behavioral choices. There are no selfless people in this world, and all actions that harm oneself and benefit others are deliberately disguised. However, this explanation has many problems and is

often criticized and criticized by people. Scholars who hold the view of ethical selfishness believe that the satisfaction of certain desires is a sufficient and necessary condition for our value judgments and behavioral choices. When interacting with others, we unconsciously place our own interests at the core. Under the guidance of this theory, people are inevitably bound to do some unfair things and refuse to accept any moral standards other than this. Psychological egoism and ethical egoism are essentially self-centered ideas centered on the individual, and society is composed of many primitive individuals. If egoistic ideas prevail in society, everyone only cares about their own interests and does not pay attention to social and collective interests, which is not conducive to the construction of a harmonious society.

Egoism can be seen as a moral viewpoint to some extent, but it is often seen as an unethical or morally controversial viewpoint. This is because selfishness often ignores the care and interests of others, while morality involves respect, care, and responsibility for others. In some cases, selfishness may contradict morality, such as if an individual's interests go against the interests of society or the environment, or if their own interests are achieved through deception, exploitation, or harming others.

Therefore, although selfishness may be a moral viewpoint, it cannot be simply regarded as moral or immoral. It depends on the specific context and understanding of morality. In moral paradoxes, the theory of selfishness may lead to some difficult contradictions and problems, such as conflicts between personal interests and social interests, conflicts between individual rights and the rights of others, etc. These issues require us to think deeply and explore in order to seek reasonable solutions.

In the 19th century, É lysieux in France and Feuerbach in Germany believed that self-interest was a moral law in society, and people always followed their own interests in value judgments and behavioral choices. Therefore, we cannot ignore the existence of egoistic thinking, but should understand human self-interest in a moral way. Feuerbach, starting from personal interests, combined personal interests with social interests to construct an ethical doctrine for safeguarding the interests of the bourgeoisie - rational egoism. Feuerbach believed that rational egoism, while pursuing self-interest, also includes social and collective interests, and all egoistic activities are essentially altruistic activities. As long as people pursue personal interests legally, personal interests can be organically coordinated with collective interests and social interests. In the feudal era, it was difficult to organically coordinate individual interests with collective interests and social interests. Only under the capitalist system can we unify the two, and everyone can pursue personal interests ethically

and realize the value of life. In real life, if we are faced with moral dilemmas, rational egoistic ethics can also help us make reasonable choices.

2.2 Utilitarianism

Utilitarianism, also known as utilitarianism or utilitarianism, is considered synonymous with the pursuit of efficiency in most contexts. Utilitarians advocate for the pursuit of "maximum happiness". But even before utilitarianism theory was incorporated into the formal philosophical system, the embryonic form of utilitarianism had already emerged. In ancient Greece, philosopher Democritus proposed the theory of hedonism philosophy. Joyists propose from the perspectives of biology and psychology that human life in the human world is to enjoy physical and mental happiness, to seek pleasure and avoid suffering, and to enjoy a happy and fulfilling life, which is the driving force and purpose of human existence and development. In addition, Epicurus in ancient Greece and Mozi in pre Qin China also proposed to make humans pursue the greatest happiness and how to live a happy and joyful life.

Utilitarianism can be divided into situational utilitarianism, universal utilitarianism, and rule-based utilitarianism based on the way it is applied. Situational utilitarianism emphasizes how we should choose to maximize the happiness of all members in the current context. For example, killing is a criminal act, but in certain specific situations, killing is considered a well intentioned act, such as armed police soldiers killing terrorists or Eighth Route Army soldiers eliminating Japanese invaders who invaded our country's territory. Universal utilitarianism emphasizes that if everyone must act according to the moral law that I agree with, what would the world be like? For example, can poor people at the bottom of society use violence to snatch money from the rich? Of course, if we look at it from the perspective of situationists, this approach seems feasible because the number of rich people is definitely much smaller than the number of poor people. Therefore, the poor seizing the wealth of the rich can increase the disposable wealth of the vast majority of poor people in society in a short period of time, and as a result, the maximum happiness value of all members is increased. However, from the perspective of a universal utilitarian, this approach is clearly not feasible. If everyone in this society does this, over time, the society will become chaotic. Rule utilitarianism holds that if everyone agrees with and follows the same set of moral rules (which should be reasonable and legal), the greatest happiness value can be generated. But some scholars believe that the society in which humans live is constantly developing, and some of the contradictions that exist in society will also undergo corresponding changes. If rule

utilitarianism cannot effectively adjust, it will eventually become unreasonable.

2.3   Moral absolutism

Moral absolutism, as the name suggests, refers to an absolute way of thinking in which people make value judgments and behavioral choices. The absolute way of thinking in moral evaluation should have only one standard to guide practice. Kant is a typical representative of moral absolutism.

In Kant's Critique of Pure Reason, prior freedom is just an idea, but Kant also left a place for freedom, making it a fact in Kant's Critique of Practical Reason, which is Kant's moral theory. The moral law is not empty. We cannot say that what we think in our minds is a fact. We must put it into practice. As a practical law, the moral law aims to have a real impact on the object world, and from this impact, we can see that it is a rational fact, not an empirical fact. The facts of experience can be inferred according to natural laws to determine what kind of things a person will do. For example, we can say that someone is hungry or penniless. These are all facts of experience, which can be judged according to natural laws. But we cannot say that he is penniless and hungry just because of this, and he has to steal money or food. This cannot be deduced according to natural laws, but can only be inferred based on morality. This rational fact indicates that humans have freedom, which means that although freedom cannot be theoretically proven or described, we cannot acquire knowledge about it (what is freedom and what is its mechanism of occurrence?), and we cannot use intellect (or broad theoretical rationality) to understand it. The concept of freedom cannot be theoretically explored for its reasons, but it becomes a fact in practice. That is to say, this person committed suicide and sacrificed their life for righteousness. Without a purely rational perspective, we cannot understand it no matter what. Why would he do such a thing? Who wouldn't cherish their own life? Only when we go beyond the laws of nature and understand him from a purely rational perspective, can we explain what he has done. This matter is not something he said, but something he did to make it a fact. But this fact is also a rational fact, which shows that people have freedom, and this freedom is not an empirical fact, but a rational fact.

However, moral absolutism also has significant limitations. Moral absolutism denies the historicity, class and nationality of human society, and denies the progressive development of morality from lower to higher levels. Advocating the establishment of an absolute moral truth that is suitable for all times and all nations, Kant's philosophy of absolute morality is prone to causing society to fall into a crisis of totalitarianism. In today's era of globalized economic development, every country's culture is diverse, and blindly emphasizing a single

philosophical theory will lead human society towards moral nihilism.

Through the analysis in the previous text, we can see that absolutism unilaterally exaggerates the absoluteness of a certain viewpoint and denies its relativity. Moral absolutism is manifested in dogmatism and ideological solidification in real life. Therefore, the theory of moral absolutism is not a "panacea" for dealing with social moral issues, but rather a solution or inspiration for us to solve problems.

3. Research on the Solution Path of Tram Difficulties

If we look at the trolley problem from the perspective of the utilitarian theory proposed by philosopher Bentham, then the act of a trolley driver pulling a lever and hitting someone to death is the most ethical choice. Because Bentham's utilitarianism measures moral behavior based on the maximum happiness of the largest majority of members in the social community, it is clear that pulling the lever will only kill one person, but can save five. However, once you pull that lever, you become the murderer of innocent victims. Even if you successfully save the lives of five people, isn't an innocent life worth cherishing? Can you not bear any responsibility? But you still have to make a choice. If you turn a blind eye and choose the method of inaction, watching five fresh lives pass away, you still have to bear the condemnation of public opinion and deep self blame in your heart. Your inaction is also immoral. In short, no matter how you choose, there is no such thing as a completely moral behavior.

Professor Michael Sandel of Harvard University once offered an open course on justice online. During the course, he used the trolley problem as an example to introduce the concept and principles of justice. In order to better inspire the audience, Professor Michael Sandel further extended the trolley problem: Suppose you are no longer the trolley driver in the trolley problem, but a passerby walking on a pedestrian bridge. At this moment, a speeding out of control trolley is about to collide with five innocent people tied to the trolley track by a mentally ill patient. Fortunately, there is a fat guy right in front of you. You only need to push the fat guy in front of you hard, and he can fall off the bridge and block the out of control trolley. Tram, save the lives of those five innocent people. Considering the examples listed above, Bentham's utilitarian principles do not seem to be a "panacea" for solving moral paradoxes. When faced with these issues, we may ponder: what exactly is morality? What are the criteria for evaluating morality? Morality is a broad and complex concept that involves

many aspects such as people's words and actions, thoughts and culture, etiquette norms, etc. At the same time, morality is also a part of the superstructure of thought, emphasizing the behavioral norms that people should abide by in their daily lives. Of course, there are different standards for evaluating morality, but generally the criteria for moral judgment are based on the subject's behavioral motivation, the outcome of the behavior, or the combination of the subject's motivation and the outcome of the behavior.

After the proposal of the paradox of the trolley problem, it has attracted the attention of many scholars. Regarding how to solve the paradox of the trolley problem, some people have put forward the following different views:

(1) Your free will is restricted, and your personal actions are constrained. In this extremely critical situation, you can only choose to pull the lever or turn a blind eye. However, one of these two choices must be moral and the other is immoral. This moral evaluation standard guided by the results of subject behavior choices coincides with the ethical values of utilitarianism.

(2) You choose to pull the lever to make the tram change tracks and crush someone, and you do not take any responsibility at all. Because killing this person was not something you "intentionally" did, in fact, you don't really want to kill this person in your heart. However, due to external limitations, you must choose between killing one person or five people. This is something you cannot avoid or prevent. From a utilitarian perspective, choosing to change tracks and crush someone in this situation is the least costly for a tram driver. Because your behavior is influenced by uncontrollable external factors, you are not at all responsible for choosing to change tracks and crush someone's behavior.

We can see from the case of the trolley problem that different behavioral choices of trolley drivers can have different consequences. So, what exactly is behavior? If we look at it from the perspective of human free will, behavior itself can be divided into "intentional" behavior and "unintentional" behavior. In real life, each and every one of us

Everyone is responsible for their own actions, so what kind of actions should people be responsible for? The famous American philosopher of the mind, J.R. Searle, has provided some inspiration for us to solve this problem by studying the explanations of "action" and "behavior". Searle believed that the most important difference between "action" and "behavior" lies in whether the subject has the will to freely choose, that is, whether the subject's behavior is "intentional" or "unintentional". From the perspective of the extension of

traditional logic, the extension of behavior is much larger than that of action. For example, a student who is studying online courses seriously in the library suddenly broke his Bluetooth earphones, making a loud noise that disturbed other students studying in the library. Usually, we believe that his action is not intentional, and it is obvious that this is a behavior; And if this student intentionally wants to make their voice heard to attract others' attention, it is considered an action. In real life, each of us must take responsibility for our actions, but I believe that what we do here should be limited to intentional behavior. In the case of the trolley problem, it is not difficult to see that the actions of the trolley driver, whether he chooses to pull or not, should be regarded as a behavior rather than an action. The conclusion drawn from the case of the trolley problem is that people should not be held responsible for their non freely chosen actions, which should become a preset in ethics.

In the trolley problem, a trolley with a malfunctioning braking system is bound to crash into someone dead. An event that kills at least one person is inevitable, while an event that kills five people is only possible (depending on your choice at the time). If this out of control tram really kills these five innocent people in the end, this tragic result must be caused by your inaction. You not only have to bear the condemnation of public opinion, but also accept legal judgment. Of course, here we consider all six innocent people in the trolley problem as individuals of equal value.

How to view inaction? We only need to make simple modifications to the thought experiment of the trolley problem, and it is not difficult to find that inaction is also an "action" in some situations. We can assume that a mentally ill patient is tied up with five people in front of the tram track, while there is nothing on the other side of the tram track. At this point, the braking system of the tram has malfunctioned. As the tram driver, if you pull the lever, you can steer the tram to the other side. However, if you ignore them and let the tram collide with them, it is an unethical behavior. You know you can completely avoid tragedy, but you choose not to act. Your inaction fundamentally violates the moral standards of human society, and you not only face moral condemnation, but also legal sanctions. But if there is also a person on the other side of the tram track

Bound by a rope. We must make choices within the predetermined context. Although the trolley problem is a thought experiment, the scenario of the trolley problem is very likely to occur in our real life. This is a fact that we must face, and all we can do is make every effort to avoid risks.

Furthermore, in real life, can everyone be regarded as an atomic individual? Can everyone's

value be considered equal? If we know in advance that the six innocent victims in the trolley problem are rapists, fraudsters, workers, entrepreneurs, and university professors, will their identities and social status bring you new difficulties in thinking and making choices? Do rapists and fraudsters have the same rights as entrepreneurs and university professors in the face of critical moments of life and death? Similarly, if the person tied to the tram track is not a stranger, but your family, would you treat them equally as strangers?

This paradox reflects some fundamental questions in ethics, such as: What is morally correct behavior? How should we balance different moral values? And the issue of personal responsibility and consequentialism. In philosophy, this paradox is also used to explore human moral judgment and decision-making. Some philosophers believe that this paradox reveals the inconsistency and relativity of human moral judgments. Because different individuals or cultures may make different choices based on different moral principles. Meanwhile, this paradox also challenges traditional moral theories such as deontological ethics and consequentialism.

In short, the paradox of the trolley problem is a profound ethical paradox that triggers people's deep thinking on moral choices and decisions, and also challenges traditional moral theories.

4. Conclusion

Moral paradox is a special type of contradiction that exists in human society. It is a result that appears in behavioral choices and has an absolute opposition and antagonistic nature between good and evil. Due to the fact that moral paradoxes are a product of human social practice, the self contradictory good and evil in moral paradoxes cannot be simply judged from the perspective of logical thinking, but must be analyzed based on actual situations.

By exploring philosophical theories related to moral paradoxes and conducting research on the resolution path of the trolley problem, it not only has significant theoretical significance for the academic study of paradoxes, but also has practical value for the establishment of a moral society. Studying moral paradoxes is not only beneficial for the interdisciplinary development of paradoxes, but also helps people understand the development process and objective laws of moral paradoxes, recognize their own moral environment, and enable them to calmly cope with moral dilemmas, consciously abide by social moral norms, resolve moral paradoxes, create a good social atmosphere, and improve the social governance system.

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