Ethics based on Utility and Social Struggle

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Abstract. The complete theory of history can only be obtained when the needs of people are pointed out completely as Abraham H. Maslow did. The purpose of human life is to survive, breed and meet needs of themselves, which is the final source of all values and significance. The original meaning of good is the characteristic of other people's actions or consciousness which is favorable to the subject. Public opinion can be engendered by everyone praising good and cursing evil, and objective meaning of good can then be formed: The objective meaning of good is the characteristic of a person's action or consciousness which is favorable to others.

Keywords: Ethics; utilitarianism; good; evil.

1. Utilitarianism

Sigmund Freud believed that sexual desire determines social history, [1] while Karl H. Marx had faith on physiologic needs for food, clothes and so on which determine social history. [2] All these theories are reasonable, and therefore have much influence, but all these theories are not complete. The complete theory of history can only be obtained when the needs of people are pointed out completely as Abraham H. Maslow did. Maslow described that people have five levels of needs: physiological needs, safety needs, belonging and love needs, esteem needs, and self-actualization needs. [3]

It has been concluded in my book Philosophy of Life with Self-organization that self-reproduction is the sufficient and necessary condition of the origin of life, so the essence of life is breeding. And therefore the purpose of human life is concluded: the purpose of human life is to survive, breed and meet needs of themselves, which is the final source of all values and significance.[4] According to John S. Mill, the principle of utility is, "actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness." "pleasure, and freedom from pain, are the only things desirable as ends."[5] The happiness, according to Jeremy Bentham, include not only happiness of sense and wealth, but also amity, benevolence and skill, etc.[6] These are similar to Maslow's belonging, love and self-actualization.[7] Bentham pointed out profoundly that "common sense", "rule of right", "law of nature", etc., are all reducible to the principle of utility, asceticism is only a misuse of the principle of utility.[8] David Hume proved that morality cannot originate from reason, reason ought to be the slave of sensibility.[9] The super-ego, which Sigmund Freud mentioned, is the slave of id, too.

Jacques P. Thiroux distinguished egoism with utilitarianism. Universal ethical egoism states as its basic principle that everyone should always act in his own self-interest regardless of the interests of others unless their interests also serve his. Utilitarianism try to figure out which act would bring about the greatest amount of good consequences not just for himself or herself, but for everyone involved in the situation. Both egoism and utilitarianism are consequentialism. One of the reasons, which Jacques P. Thiroux and some other philosophers opposed consequentialism, is that benefit is difficult to assess. [10] It is difficult indeed, especially when different benefits of a person or of different people are contradictory. But we have to assess no matter how difficult it is, and in fact, everyone is calculating his benefit every day. For example, we always calculate gains and losses again and again when we go shopping, marry, or look for a work. Companies always forecast before investment, governments always assess the result before practise a policy or sign a treaty. There are usually mistakes among these assessments, but people are always learning from mistakes.

Bentham, Hume, Mill, Han Feizi (lived in China more than 2200 years ago), and many other philosophers have implied the principle of utility, but few of them explained the basis of it correctly. Bentham and Mill believed that the principle of utility cannot prove. [11] In fact, this principle is only

able to prove by the knowledge of the essence of life. Adam Smith cited the theory of Zeno, the founder of the Stoical doctrine, to explain the origin of utility principle: Every animal was by nature recommended to its own care, and was endowed with the principle of self-love, that it might endeavor to preserve, not only its existence, but all the different parts of its nature, in the best and most perfect state of which they were capable. [12]

The principle of egoism of animals leads to the law of jungle. Similarly, the principle of egoism of people also leads to the law of jungle, which is practiced in politics, military, economy, sports and so on, in history and now. Why do not I get my benefit by force, which is often the simplest way, if I can? Why should I care about others and learn to be gentle?

2. The Subjective Definition of Good and Evil

The concept good has two different meanings, one is beneficence opposite evil, another is utility opposite bad or loss. The good as beneficence is different from utility and happiness completely. Happiness belongs to the subject (person who is able to make decisions) himself, while good and evil are characteristics of actions between people. Good and evil, instead of happiness, is the moral criterion of society. Murder and drug trafficking are actions for happiness of the subject, but not agree with virtues.

Confucius noted that the meaning of beneficence is "to love others". Adam Smith said, "Concern for our own happiness recommends to us the virtue of prudence; concern for that of other people, the virtue of justice and beneficence." [13] The virtues (like wisdom, bravery, abstinence, hope and faith) are often used as instruments of selfishness in battles against others, though they can be used for beneficence, too.

The original meanings of good and evil are their subjective meaning, which is the valuation on other people's actions for the benefit of the subject.

The subjective definition of good and evil: The good is the characteristic of other people's actions or consciousness which is favorable to the subject. The evil is the characteristic of other people's actions or consciousness which is harmful to the subject.

3. The Objective Definition of Good and Evil

Adam Smith said, "Nature, too, had taught us, that as the prosperity of two was preferable to that of one, that of many, or of all, must be infinitely more so." [14] Most emperors, however, considered their own happiness more important than the total happiness of public, and did not mind to sacrifice hundreds and thousands of lives for it. Good and justice are not surely come from nature.

Why do not we murder or fire? An important reason is our fear in mind, though each has good characters in nature. Fear to what? To punishment. Each good person may kill others on certain conditions like revenge or seeking to live on. History stories tell us that bad deeds, as well as good, may rebound upon the doer. That is why we advocate good. The idea of altruism is possible to emerge automatically, but it may disappear easily if not be encouraged. Peter Singer listed four reasons for not killing people (the effects of the killing on others; the frustration of the victim's desires and plans for the future; the capacity to conceive of oneself as existing over time; and respect for autonomy), [15] but no one of them is able to stop Hitler from killing Jews. The only way is to resist force by force. Punishment is a kind of negative feedback, which is one of major tools to maintain the order of society. Army, police and the alarm of the Judgement Day are always necessary to guard justice.

Punishment is originally made when people resist others for their utility, not by leaders as Bentham said. The basic law of the world is the law of jungle, and there is no natural human right at all.

It is clear in the subjective definition that good and evil are valuations of subject as egoist without any objectivity in it. Where does the unified criterion of good and evil come from then? Everyone praises good and curses evil. Public opinion comes into being from everyone's voice, therefore consistent praise to altruism and consistent curse to mean actions originates in society. In this way the objective definition of good and evil is accepted.

The objective definition of good and evil: The good is the characteristic of a person's action or consciousness which is favorable to others. The evil is the characteristic of a person's action or consciousness which is harmful to others.

Good actions include helping others, being courtesy, in good faith, etc. virtue is the willing to increase benefits of others. It is said in the Matthew of the Bible, "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them". Confucius said in the Analects, "Do not impose upon others what you yourself do not desire."[16]

The reason why people praise good and curse evil is that everyone hopes to be benefited and avoid to be harmed. So, the egoism is the reason why good becomes the public criterion of morality. Each one knows that selfishness is the motive of evil, while few know that selfishness is the motive of good. The second reason, which Jacques P. Thiroux and Brian Medlin opposed egoism, is that egoism contradicts altruism. [17] But they are, in fact, unified. The fact that we now live in a society which worships virtue mainly owes to selfishness of people, instead of preaches of priests.

W. D. Hamilton, the British biologist, produced the concept of Kin Selection to explain that many altruistic actions of animals are, in fact, selfishness. [18] It is similar for human being. No matter whether the motive of altruistic action is altruism or selfishness, the action is good. Good people may be respected by others, and therefore own larger competitive power to make them win. As a result, good becomes the aim and fashionable idea of public. Confucius said, "Desiring to take his stand, one who is ren help others to take their stand; wanting to realize himself, he helps others to realize themselves." [19] The egoism makes us want praise and fear curse and punishment, therefore manage to obtain other's respect and increase our competitive power by altruistic actions.

Though people have good nature, it does not have enough power to defeat selfishness. It is only selfishness that is able to defeat selfishness, only struggle and balance among people have enough power to make our society worship virtue.

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