

Why Do People Have Different Moral Standards? the Influencing Factors of Moral Standards

Jiayu Wang ^{1,*}

¹ Beijing No.4 High School, Beijing, Xicheng district 100034, China

*Corresponding author. Email: jonathan233@stu.ahu.edu.cn

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to explore the factors that affect people's moral standards and analyze what factors affect people's moral standards with real cases. This paper aims to summarize and compare the viewpoints of different papers on the same topic. Through analysis, it can be found that four main factors are influencing moral standards: culture, moral relationships, values, evolution. These factors make everyone have their judgment on a moral dilemma. Therefore, understanding the specific factors that affect people's moral standards helps us to understand why others have different views on the same issue.

Keywords: Moral Change, Culture, Social Relationship, Value, Evolution.

1. INTRODUCTION

When two political parties vigorously argue for opposing economic policies, we may presume that both are worried about the country's economic well-being. When the prosecution and defense in a court case disagree fundamentally about guilt or innocence, one might begin by stating that both parties want justice to be served[1]. Today, a lot of social issues mean that people have different opinions. Oftentimes people have hundreds of views on something. Articles on moral dilemmas appear one after the other, and there are innumerable analyzes of actual societal problems. For example, in our daily life, we face a variety of moral dilemmas. In each case, the agent believes that he has a moral reason for doing each of the two actions, but it is impossible to perform both actions. Ethics call these situations moral dilemmas[2]. Like Maestri and Monforte's sociology analysis article, they find the moral dilemmas British volunteers have to face in their interactions with refugees and the strategies they develop to avoid the difficulties that emerge when judging who the 'deserving' refugees are. And how they can cope with their emotions by emphasizing the practicality of their role and moving beyond the logic of deservingness[3]. When moral dilemmas occur, we need to think about what influences our decisions in moral dilemmas. But now we are missing a summary of these articles, that is, analyzing what leads us to have different views on the same social problems. In today's society with different

moral standards, there will be false consumption biases if we judge things only according to our moral standards.

To understand why people have different views on the same thing, we need to clarify what affects people's moral evaluation standards. Therefore, this paper lists four aspects that have a very obvious impact on people's moral standards, namely culture, social relations, values, and evolution. After understanding these things that can affect people's moral standards, we can put ourselves in a position to think about why others have different ideas about a thing from ourselves.

2. THE INFLUENCE FACTORS

2.1. The influence from culture

The first thing we should focus on in the moral change is the influence of culture. In cultural relativism, the judgment of right or wrong is not absolute. The right or wrong of a thing depends on its cultural background. The issue of abortion has been debated for a long time. The right and wrong of abortion are still debated. However, those who hold that abortion is the right thing can explain it from two perspectives: the fetus is an incomplete living body, and preventing abortion will cause harm to pregnant women. Those who believe in Christianity believe that God has a plan for the life of the fetus in the pregnant woman and that God commands reproduction and sees it as a blessing and therefore abortion is disobeying God and disrespectful[4]. A

person who grew up under the influence of Christian culture will think that abortion is against God's will, so it is wrong. To ignore the respect of abortion for women's wishes and the consideration of bioscience. People who do not believe in Christianity can not understand why people who believe in Christianity affect their judgment of reality because of 'non-existent things' (what people who do not believe in Christianity think). This has led to a completely different moral standard for abortion. In some people's moral standards, abortion is undoubtedly a matter of killing life and its evil. In some people's moral standards, abortion has become a matter of people's democracy and freedom. In addition, the issue of women's rights is also a striking example of changing moral standards as a result of cultural change. In ancient China, Confucian culture was very popular in many dynasties. Up to now, the Confucius Institute named after Confucius, the outstanding philosopher of Confucianism, still teaches students all over the world. However, in ancient China, Confucianism had some very rigid requirements for women. The Chinese called it "three obediences and four virtues". These "three obediences" mean that women should obey their father when they are unmarried, their husband after marriage, and their son after their husband dies; "four virtues" means women's moral character, rhetoric, manners, and needlework. This includes some ideas that women break in when men talk about national affairs, which is not women's way, women can't eat at the table and have to cook for men. However, when we jump out of the Confucian culture and think about today's social culture, we pay special attention to women's rights. Monica Castillejos Aragon expressed women's presence in the Judiciary has helped to develop stronger, more independent, accessible, and gender-sensitive judicial institutions[5]. In her article *A Need for Change*. People pay more and more attention to the status of women. Earlier this year, Mauritius elected its first female president, and the vitality of Mauritius democracy has reached a whole new level. With her election as a female president, Mauritius has shown a true age, certainly a model democracy, and a testament to the island's political maturity[6]. In ancient China, people thought that women's failure to act following the 'three obediences and four virtues' was moral corruption. Now, women's status is getting higher and higher because of their high appreciation and encouragement for women's dare to participate in law and politics, which is inseparable from people's moral judgment on women's rights, which is constantly changing because of culture.

2.2. The influence from the social relationship

When people evaluate morality, social relations are also one of the important influencing factors. When people evaluate morality, social relations are also one of the important influencing factors. Counterfeit exists in any country, and the principle is the same. Social laws think that a certain group is relatively weak (elderly

patients in China, female office workers in Japan, blacks in the United States, LGBT, etc.), and then formulate relevant biased laws. Then the so-called vulnerable groups make use of legal loopholes to make profits for themselves. For instance, an organization known as *Knappschaften* is liable for providing benefits to workers and many of them gain sickness funds by cheating: "Late nineteenth-century observers noted that *Knappschaften* experienced strong growth in the number of days their members claimed to be sick. Contemporaries blamed this development on Simulation, or feigning illness, and thought it reflected changes in the miners' social status and the deterioration of social ties among VK members brought about by increases in the size and territory of individual associations[7]." This story shows a thing that often happens in reality. At first, people thought that the workers were poor and worthy of sympathy, so they set up this organization to fully trust the workers and give subsidies. People think such an organization is very kind. Now, after these things happen, people will only feel that adopting such a system is very stupid. What is reflected in this matter is the change of moral judgment caused by the change of social relations between public welfare organizations and workers. Originally, the two sides should have a relationship of mutual trust, but the deception of workers led to the breakdown of trust, which made people think that it is right for public welfare organizations to take stricter measures against workers, rather than unnecessary. It's like when counterfeit doesn't often happen in China, people will feel that it's extremely irresponsible to look at the person hit by a car. But now, many times, people who fall are just pretending to be injured and have received more compensation, or even directly and deliberately bumping into the car to get compensation (in China, to avoid being sued or losing the benefits of insurance companies, they often give money privately to solve these things). Therefore, people think that staying in the car and calling the police is the wisest way to protect themselves. In 1854, London was beset by an outbreak of cholera in the vicinity of Broad Street in Soho. A local doctor, John Snow, convinced town officials to take the handle off the communal water pump on the street, making it impossible to draw water. From an analysis of the location of households with the disease, he'd found that a common factor was access to water from the pump. The incidence of cholera almost immediately trickled to a stop[8]. It is not difficult to imagine that before cholera if the government took away the water pump, the local people must not accept it, even if the government may have the necessary purpose. However, because of cholera, people become more dependent on the government, so social relations have changed, so the government can directly prevent people from drinking water in such a direct way, he'd found that a common factor was access to water from the pump. The incidence of cholera almost immediately trickled to a stop.

2.3. The influence from the value

Everyone has different priority evaluation standards for things, that is, different values, so it will also lead to different moral standards. But the question here is whether the author's discussion of people's daily moral equality and mutual benefit can reveal the transcendental moral perceptions that are essential to the competitive creation of culture. For Darwin himself, moral virtue was most clearly associated not with universally down-to-earth intuitions, beliefs, and behaviors of justice and reciprocity, emotionally supported by empathy and consolation, but with an unevenly distributed bias toward what we today call "parochial altruism" Especially extreme self-sacrifice during the war and other intense forms of human conflict, where the probable prospects of individual and even group survival were very low. Heroism, martyrdom, and other forms of self-sacrifice for the group seem to go beyond the mutualistic principles of fairness and reciprocity[9]. In this passage of Atran's article, the author introduces the results of different values in war. Compared with traditional mutualism, extreme self-assurance, which goes beyond the traditional extreme idea of fairness and reciprocity, leads to a decline in the survival rate of individuals and groups. This shows that people have different moral standards for their behavior under different values. This is easy to understand. The trolley problem is a classic moral dilemma that has been discussed for a long time. In this story, people's decisions are largely influenced by their values. For utilitarians, they will relentlessly let the car drive to the side with few people. For some people with natural rights in the state of nature, no one has the right to deprive anyone else of their lives. Therefore, in the trolley problem, they can't apply their judgment to the original train. Interestingly, many times, when judging the moral problems in life, we don't just use a kind of moral judgment. Guy Kahane once said that moral standards in life are often not unified. After all, utilitarianism and Kantian ethics are abstract theories first proposed by the West hundreds of years ago and have never won the support of more than a few people, which is questionable[10]. Even though countless moral standards have been proposed in history, people cannot take a specific standard as a strict constraint on themselves like Kant. Therefore, in daily life, people are often affected by multiple values at the same time.

2.4. The influence from the evolution

It is wrong that people often ignore the impact of evolution when talking about changes in moral standards. Imagine that under the action of natural selection, human beings have formed a social survival model. Thus, the survival mode generated under the influence of evolution inevitably gives birth to morality, such as patterns of collaboration and attribution, or parental care and bonding. Julia Herman once said that given the special

nature of many evolutionary explanations and the wide range of theories available, references to evolution may be used to justify both humanistic and optimal more perspectives Moral improvement is exceedingly improbable, according to the most pessimistic genetically informed view, given the inadequacy of our evolved emotional reactions and the limited chances for both conventional and biological moral betterment. Given our ability for phenotypic plasticity, greater knowledge of moral psychology, and a clearer grasp of the evolution of the ethical endeavor, the odds of (further) moral growth are good, according to the most optimistic perspective[11]. There is an example, the notion that biological altruism might emerge through natural selection may appear perplexing at first. Consider social insect colonies, particularly the Hymenoptera (bees, ants, and wasps). We discover such a high level of cooperation in these colonies—labor division (queen, workers, warriors, etc.), food sharing, and information sharing—that it's tempting to think of the colony as a single functional body This mechanism of "kin selection" can explain how worker bees evolved such apparently 'selfless' traits, focused on aiding the queen's survival and reproduction. The situation is even more interesting and extreme: workers have evolved to serve the queen's reproduction at the complete expense of their own, as they are sterile. This extreme biological altruism, however, may be explained by the same principles, with the addition of the fact that due to a genetic peculiarity of the Hymenoptera (their haplodiploid), sisters are more closely related to each other genetically than they would be to their offspring. This means that natural selection will favor worker traits that help their mother reproduce (thus making more sisters, who are especially likely to carry copies of the gene for that same trait, making it spread), over traits in workers aimed at personal reproduction[12].

3. SUMMARY

By summarizing the literature, this paper analyzes three important factors that can affect people's moral standards. The first is the influence of culture on people's moral standards. Whether it has been influenced by Christian culture shows people's different views on abortion. People who have not been influenced by Christian culture will not think so if they do not respect God. Moreover, by comparing the requirements of ancient Chinese people for women's three obediences and four virtues, the election of a female president of Mauritius, and the analysis of the importance of women's status in the judiciary, we can clarify the impact of culture on people's moral standards. This influence now exists more or less in Chinese society. The second thing this paper introduces that has an impact on people's moral standards is social relations. This may not be easily observed at ordinary times, but the impact of social relations on people's moral standards can be seen through

the relationship between the German knappschaften organization and the miners to be protected by the organization (from protection to trust crisis). So we can also know why when someone lies in front of the car, people now have different views from people before. In the past, people would think that people in the car needed to quickly assist the knocked down people, but now people would not even think that the lay people were knocked down but would think that they went diving to defraud money. This is also because the relationship between people has changed. Third, the impact of values on people's moral standards can not be ignored, even the most important, because it can internally affect people's moral standards. This can be understood through the description of people's different values leading to different behaviors in the war in Atran's article. In addition, the tram problem is also a very good example. Comparing utilitarianism with natural rights in the state of nature, we can also see how different values make people judge the right and wrong of a thing from the inside. However, people's values are often not absolute. Evolution genetically affects people's moral standards. The moral standards brought by the formation of human society and the altruistic behavior brought by Hymenoptera because of heredity provide evidence.

4. CONCLUSION

A study of these events reveals that morality is profound. influenced by culture, social relations, and values. Knowing what influences moral standards allows you to understand the different choices others make compared to yourself. Respecting the opinions of others also shows that you are polite and respectful of them. If someone has a different opinion than you and you reply "I understand and respect your opinion" instead of replying to your opinion, why is it correct and why? Anyone who is wrong or has a different opinion than you will respect you back. The common ground could be a basis of mutual interest or agreement that is found or established within the course of the associate argument. Just like what Lawrie said: surprisingly, common ground may be found even when two organizations share opposing viewpoints. You don't have to go all day to find out why your opinion is correct, because the people you are discussing think their opinion is correct and your opinion is wrong. Therefore, it becomes a constant cycle of arguing about who is right and who is wrong, and here is the reason.

REFERENCES

- [1] D., Lawrie., (2005). *Speaking to Good Effect: An introduction to the theory and practice of rhetoric.*
- [2] T., McConnell., (2018). *Moral Dilemmas* (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy). Stanford.edu. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/moral-dilemmas/>

- [3] G., Maestri., & P., Monforte., (2020). Who Deserves Compassion? The Moral and Emotional Dilemmas of Volunteering in the 'Refugee Crisis.' *Sociology*, 54(5),920.935. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038520928199>
- [4] E., Wynne., & J., McBrayer., (2021). Progressive atheism: how moral evolution changes the god debate. *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, 89(1), 91–97. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11153-021-09788-w>
- [5] M., Castillejos-Aragón., (2021). A need for change: Why do women in the judiciary matter? *Konrad Adenauer Stiftung*. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep30763>
- [6] E., Phaahla., (2015). *Mauritius and its First Woman President*. Institute for Global Dialogue. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep30631>
- [7] T. W., Guinnane, & J., Streb, (2011). Moral Hazard in a Mutual Health Insurance System: German Knappschaften, 1867–1914. *The Journal of Economic History*, 71(1), 70–104. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0022050711000039>
- [8] J., Coyne, & P. Jennings, (Eds.). (2020). *The world after Covid-19*. In *After Covid-19: Australia and the world rebuild* (Volume 1) (pp. 60–126). Australian Strategic Policy Institute. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep25138.6>
- [9] S., Atran, (2013). From mutualism to moral transcendence. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 36(1), 81–82. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0140525x12000714>
- [10] G., Kahane, (2015). Sidetracked by trolleys: Why sacrificial moral dilemmas tell us little (or nothing) about utilitarian judgment. *Social Neuroscience*, 10(5), 551–560. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17470919.2015.1023400>
- [11] J., Hermann, Possibilities of Moral Progress in the Face of Evolution. *Ethic Theory Moral Prac* 20, 39–54 (2017). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10677-016-9737-2>
- [12] F., William, "Morality and Evolutionary Biology", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2021 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2021/entries/morality-biology/>