On the Unity of Morality and Good Fortune from the Perspective of Ethics

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Abstract. In the modern society, people are becoming richer and richer. However, many new pessimistic phenomena that never appears before the implementation of the reform and opening up policy are happening. One of the most serious problem is the disunity of morality and good fortune. In the deep heart of Chinese people, the unity of morality and good fortune is a very powerful strength for them to face difficulties and obstacles in their life. Therefore, it’s very significant to discuss this topic theoretically so as to analyze it clearly and then find a way to solve the disunity of morality and good fortune. This article tries to explain what is the unity of morality and good fortune, why Chinese people need it and how to solve the disunity of morality and good fortune in the modern society.

Introduction

The unity of morality and good fortune is theoretical as well as practical. A clear theoretical context is the forerunner of implementing good behaviors. It is necessary to uplift the unity of morality and good fortune to the theoretical level, which could transform moral emotion to moral will, so as to maintain the correct moral values stably and durably. There are many scholars in the academic circle who have discussed the unity of morality and good fortune theoretically and made many achievements. The author believes that researches on the unity of morality and good fortune can start from an ontological angle, that is, from its connotation and denotation.

The Ontological Analysis to the Unity of Morality and Good Fortune

The unity of morality and good fortune is literally meaning the unity of morality and good fortune, that is, the man who is virtuous will get happiness. In a society with the unity of morality and good fortune would be that the good is rewarded and the evil is published. Moreover, the unity of morality and good fortune means the unity of moral rights and moral obligations.

The unity of morality and good fortune represents the unity of morality and good fortune

Logically, the unity of morality and good fortune needs individual efforts as well as the collective’s. If a person actively performs the moral obligations, the collective can repay him accordingly and properly, then morality and good fortune can be unified both theoretically and practically. In the ancient society of China, the feudal rulers always advocated to govern state by morality. They established a relationship between ‘morality’ and ‘God’, considering the ethical orders and moral norms were made by God, and what the Heaven would punish people and interfere the personnel depending on whether the human behaviors conformed to moral norms. “A family given to kindness and charity will be repaid with good fortune while a family given to badness will be repaid with bad affairs.” This old Chinses saying originates from the Book of Changes and it has had a wide popularity in the folk.
Aristotle said that the primary condition of happiness is the virtue and happiness is the practical activity of souls which conforms to the virtue. Although Kant’s morality turns to the religious side finally, he realized the unity of morality and good fortune at the theoretical level by introducing the three postulates, freedom of will, soul immortality and eternity of God. Morality, whether it was used to be the tool of governing people by feudal rulers or demonstrated by philosophers in their books, has established a close relationship between ‘virtue’ and ‘repayment’. Therefore, it has provided inwardly norm and direction for people to unify virtue and good fortune in reality.

**The unity of morality and good fortune equals to karma in some extent**

In many people’s understanding, karma is a viewpoint and expression that specifies to religion. It is superstitious and unscientific. What hides behind such thinking way is the long effect of religious edification. From the perspective of moral philosophy, karma is not the reward or punishment comes from gods (Laotianye, God, Jade Emperor, or Allah). Conversely, at the social level, karma means a good systematic and living environment which are provided by a just society for its members. On an individual level, karma is what the common people’s saying “doing good will cause good to return and that bad will lead to bad”. In a long history, karma substitutes morality to deeply affect the thinking ways and behaviors of human beings, sustaining the harmony and stability of the society.

**The unity of morality and good fortune conforms to the unity of moral obligations and moral rights**

The unity of morality and good fortune is closely related with the unity of moral obligations and moral rights. Moral obligations are prior to moral rights, which proves the value and transcendence of morality. Just as Marx said, “The essence of man is not the abstract object inherent in an individual, but the synthesis of all the social relations in reality.” This sentence demonstrates the necessity of morality as well as indicates that the unity of morality and good fortune only can be realized in human relations. The advancement and development of society requires people to take advantage of rationality to fulfill moral obligations without asking for repayment. Meanwhile, self-realization and self-development of individuals can be realized in social relations. That is, the society and collective provide opportunities and platforms for individuals and at the same time, the individuals should contribute their efforts to the society and the collective. Therefore, individuals should take the whole social benefit as their starting point so as to realize themselves in the largest extent. And at the same time, the society should fully respect individual moral rights and repay them properly so as to guarantee their living conditions and their happiness.

**The Unity of Morality and Good Fortune: in a New Era**

Along with the development of time, every society will face new challenges and tasks. At present, China is in the process of constructing socialist market economy. The contradictions in the transformation period also affects the ideology and morality of people.

**The Disunity of Morality and Good Fortune**

What contradicts the unity of morality and good fortune is the pervasive phenomenon of disunity of morality and good fortune. In the background of constructing socialist market economy, the negative side of the commodity economy almost immerses in every field of social life. Many shoddy and false commodities plunge into the market. The interests of consumers are badly hurt. In contrast, unscrupulous merchants have earned a great fortune. The imperfection of socialist market economy becomes a magic weapon to earn money for many merchants. The illegal benefits far exceed the illegal costs is one of the reasons why many merchants committed against the wind.

At the government level, ideological and political education are required to be strengthen to avoid the negative effect of socialist market economy to immerse into the political field. However, with the booming development of socialist market economy, some important CPC cadres are courted disasters by power-for-money deal, exchange between power and sex, money worship and
hedonism. After broadcasted and rendered by the modern mass media, the phenomenon has caused very abominable effect among the people. The negative effects cover the great achievements created by socialist market economy, deepen the identification to social inequality inside the people and shake people’s advocacy to CPC. In the practical level, the disunity of morality and good fortune can be found easily. The person who help the old will probably be taken to the court. Congfei, who helped a lot of children but forgotten and treated coldly by them finally. What ridiculous is that some people who tread on moral norms live a happy life. They have a lot of money to spend, live in luxurious house, drive expensive cars. Morality have become a shy topic to discuss in modern society because that in many conditions, morality brings harm and hurt, that is, the disunity of virtue and happiness.

The Dysfunction of Karma

The karma becomes less influential in modern society. With the development of technology and the information age coming, the karma is de-demonized. Many people have lost faith in “doing good will cause good to return and that bad will lead to bad”. The gradual disappearance of the effect of karma embodies people’s faith in morality are weakening. It brings moral relativism, and causes mental swing and unstability.

The weakness of morality hardly links virtue to happiness, so it’s hard to persuade people to fulfill obligations for others and the collective. Just as Youyu Xu, one of the contemporary Chinese scholars, says, one of the serious problems that China faces is that, people who once did evil things refuse to confess, and conversely, those evil people obviously are living a better life than those who perform deeds according to moral norms and rules. In such a long Chinese history, the moral standpoint of common Chinese people is ‘doing good will cause good to return and that bad will lead to bad’. If such a law shows its dysfunction, what would ordinary people do?”

Unfortunately, in contemporary society, what Xu worries about has been come true. Along with the acceleration of modernization and urbanization, the social member’s mobility is strengthened, the scope of social life is expanded, and the social life is becoming more and more complex. One result is that two karma concepts, the divine justice (rewarding the virtuous and punishing the wicked) and the customary justice (doing good will cause good to return and that bad will lead to bad), have lost their effectiveness under the severe challenges in the modern society.

The Un-equivalence of Moral Obligations and Moral Rights

The relationship between moral obligations and moral rights is not simply equal to each other. Morality is originated from a long-term practical life of human being. It is a process of preserving good and discarding bad with people constantly summarize the practical experiences. It is also a ‘contract’ signed by the conscience of social members for protecting the whole social interests. The fulfillment of moral obligations is unconditional, so it should not be restricted by the tradeoff of interests and the measure of happiness. The sublime and transcendental nature of morality determine that the acquisition of moral rights can’t serve as the purpose of fulfilling moral obligations. However, it should be noted that at the social level, moral obligations and moral rights should be kept balance. Or the social tragedies will become more and more serious. Heroes will be heart-broken, virtues bring nothing but even misfortunes, honest men will be less and less while the tricky ones will be more and more. If everyone goes to moral rights and abandons moral obligations on the moral balance, if everyone chooses to do nothing in emergent moral situations, then the collective will be collapsed, just like what Hegel said “if all of the moral rights are on one side, and the moral obligations are on the other side, the wholeness will be breakdown.” The individual differentials decide the capability of fulfilling moral obligations, so the moral rights vary accordingly. The normal differentials are inevitable, and what we should do is to keep the balance of moral obligations and moral rights so as to build a relatively just social environment and create opportunities for people to acquire happiness through their contribution and their morality.
Realization of the Unity of Morality and Good Fortune

Uplifting the unity of morality and good fortune to the political culture, we can find that it is closely related with the systematical strategy of ruling the country by virtue. In Chinese ancient society, ‘virtue’ is considered as the primary factor of being officials by feudal rulers. It is said that ‘the emperor’s reign contains no relation but virtue’. Since the foundation of the People’s Republic of China, our national leaders also pay much attention to ‘virtue’, considering it as a very important factor in investigating CPC members and civil servants. Morality is one of the most important part of soft power of one country, as well as the embodiment of the comprehensive national power. The moral level of one country depends on everyone’s effort, and in order to guarantee that social members will maintain the authority of morality, the collective has the responsibility to build a society that can realize the unity of morality and good fortune.

Reestabishing a Mechanism of Unifying Moral Dedications and Moral Repayments

One of the reasons that why our society stresses the moral dedication but ignores the moral repayment is because of pinko thoughts before the reform and opening-up policy. Fifty years have passed, but many people who do good deeds at present still stick to moral dedications and shy away from talking about moral repayments. Meanwhile, new values and morals appears with the social development. Some of these new values and morals destruct the balance of moral dedications and moral repayments. People who perform good are repaid nothing and sometimes even misfortunes. Therefore, in the new ear, it is necessary to reestablish a mechanism of unifying moral dedications and moral repayments.

In modern society, one of the factors in reestablishing the mechanism of unifying moral dedications and moral repayments must be considered is the influence to moral concepts caused by the negative side of socialist market economy. The stress of currency and exchange in socialist market economy inevitably creates new human relations and moral concepts. ‘People who have virtues have happiness’ is gradually turning to ‘people who have money have happiness’. There are not so many people will care about the way of earning money. Once such thinking way becomes universal, money worship and materialism will be naturally formed. In an opposite way, morality will be ignored and even treded on because that morality transcends material interests and utilitarianism.(what needs to be emphasized is that the author doesn’t deny the coexistence of socialist market economy and ethic construction, but stresses the important role of morality in socialist market economy) In a long run, people who stand fast the moral principles will become ‘idiots’ and ‘fools’, conversely, people who take advantage of the imperfection of socialist market economy will become rich and even become the models of the time. Therefore, with the advancement of socialist market economy, we should advocate the unity of moral dedications and moral repayments.

Establishing a Just Social System

One of the origins that diverges morality and good fortune is unjust social system. Xiaoping Deng once said that “a good system prevents bad deeds happen while a bad system prevents good deeds and even encourages bad deeds”. If rule-makers only takes minority interests into account and ignores the mass, we call it an immoral society. In such a society, people who contribute more become more immoral, just like the old saying “If good deeds are not rewarded, sages will become rare. If bad deeds are not punished, villains will run wild.” A just society should give reward good and punish bad. As the above mentioned, the complexity and the extension of social life, the
frequent flowing of social members have de-demonized the traditional karma, so we can try to reestablish a new karma by the way of ethics and law, to re-realize the unity of morality and good fortune. The way of ethics and law depends on human rationality. From the individual perspective, the way of ethics mainly resorts to individual ethical consciousness. It stresses the ‘soft restriction’ of morality and self-discipline. The way of Law mainly depends on ‘hard restriction’ of the Law to set up the authority of morality. It stresses the heteronomy to regulate people’s moral actions and choices.

Theoretically, socialist public ownership provides the best condition for the unity of morality and good fortune. In this framework, the collective and individuals have common interests. Individuals exercise initiatives to create material and ideological wealth for the collective, while the collective provides platforms and opportunities for individuals to develop and repay them materially and ideologically happiness. That is, only people fulfill their obligations can repayment will come automatically. However, the complexity of human and society indicate that the divergence of morality and happiness are also existing in the framework of socialist public ownership. The contradiction can only be solved by the advantages of socialist public ownership itself, which means to improve the mechanism of social interest, justly appropriate moral obligations and moral rights with using social maneuvering system, reward the good and punish the bad.

Summary

China is in the transformation period, so it’s inevitable to undergo pains. “The ethics crisis in the transformation period is the crisis of ethical faith. The origin of the crisis of ethical faith is the interruption and disorder of karma. The interruption of karma causes the lack of moral rationality and moral effectiveness. The key breakthrough of ethical construction in modern China is reestablishing karma and build a new ethical-social ecology, giving ethics a new rationality.” The unity of morality and good fortune not only concerns to the fundamental policy of ruling the country by virtue, but also to the moral construction and the advocacy of the mass to CPC. It is a major theoretical issue in ethics, and also a practical matter relates to vital interests of people. People in every social status hopes to be rewarded by their good deeds. Our social system needs to be improved and provide people a just social environment, so as to reward the good and punish the bad, reestablish a new karma in this new era.

References


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