

An Overview of Moral Psychology

Li yuan Cheng *

College of Education and Sports Science, Yangtze University, Jingzhou 434000, China

* Corresponding author Email: 2754229892@qq.com

Abstract: Moral process has been a complex process since ancient times, and studying and understanding morality is beneficial for us to solve most of the moral dilemmas in our society, therefore, this paper mainly focuses on the introduction of moral emotions as well as the process of moral judgment, and discusses the relevant research and theories of moral psychology.

Keywords: Moral; Moral Psychology.

1. Introduction

Moral psychology refers to the psychological state, psychological structure, and psychological process of human moral speech and behavior, and all psychological phenomena involving moral problems belong to the category of moral psychology (Dou,1990). According to Zeng (1987), moral psychology is the study of morality and psychology, revealing the psychological basis of moral emergence and development, reflecting the psychological mechanism of moral knowledge and behavior, psychological process and psychological state, as well as the moral regulation of psychological imbalance and other general laws. The study of moral psychology has a long history, dating back to Hume and Darwin in foreign countries and Xunzi and Mencius in China. However, as an independent discipline, moral psychology is still a new discipline. From Piaget and Kohlberg's theory of moral development, only more than half a century of development history. Moral psychology theory has developed to the present day are many theories emerged. This paper mainly introduces the moral emotion as well as the moral judgment process to start with and discusses moral psychology.

2. Moral Emotion

Moral emotions include contempt, hatred, disgust, gratitude, reverence, shame, guilt, and embarrassment. Among them, shame, and guilt play an evident role in the development of moral behavior. Guilty and shame are highly socialized experiences of negative moral emotions, which come from the individual's cognition and evaluation of adverse incidents and are also essential factors influencing the individual's subsequent behavior.

Previous studies have defined shame as the painful emotional feelings experienced by individuals after negative evaluations of their core selves when they face some wrong or inappropriate behaviors. Shame refers to the fact that when an individual suffers from a bad event or when they have done bad behavior and have bad thoughts about themselves, they conclude that they are inherently bad or unworthy of respect.

Hoffman (1984) defines guilt as a negative emotional experience that occurs when an individual does harm to others or violates moral norms, and then generates self-examination of conscience and takes responsibility for the behavior. Unlike shame, domestic and international research agrees that the emotional experience of guilt causes people to reflect on their behaviors, to think about others, to put themselves in the

other's shoes, and to make constructions. Guilt helps people to make pro-social behavior.

Lewis (1971) argued that the "self and behavior" hypothesis is that shame focuses on the self, while guilt is associated with specific behaviors. Therefore, guilt stimulates compensatory behaviors, while shame stimulates self-avoidance. Lindsay-Hartz (1995) and others demonstrated this hypothesis using an interactive experimental approach with subjects. Another theoretical assumption about shame and guilt is that of "personal incompetence and moral transgression," a theory that can be traced back to Freud's theory of the difference between the "perfect ego" and the "superego. It is theorized that shame arises from the anxiety and tension of not satisfying the perfect ego through present behavior, which in turn generates feelings of incompetence, defectiveness, and failure, while guilt arises from violating moral norms, which is contrary to the superego. The latter is the desire to regulate oneself according to society's standards and not to go against authority, while the former is the desire to behave in a way that is close to the requirements of the perfect "I". Therefore, it is theorized that shame is ego-directed, believing that the event resulted in harm to the self, and thus shame points to avoidance and withdrawal, whereas guilt is externally-directed, thinking that one is responsible for the event, and caring about the loss of others in the event, and thus guilt points to reparation for the act.

Therefore, guilt shows a more positive effect compared to shame. Numerous studies have shown that there is a positive correlation between shame experience and various psychological problems, including post-traumatic stress disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and psychiatric disorders (Orth, 2006). The results obtained by Xie Bo after analyzing the stories of shame and guilt among Chinese college students are consistent with this theory. Thus, there is a reason to believe that guilt is more likely to initiate positive ethical behaviors than shame.

Psychoanalytic theory focuses on moral emotions, especially guilt. According to Freud, the superego represents the conscience, and the social code, and is the direction of higher human development. The superego has a supervisory and controlling role, bringing human behavior in line with social norms. The superego consists of two parts: the conscience and the ego ideal. The ego ideal makes children positive. The conscience acts as a punishment, and when a child does something wrong, conscience causes the child to feel guilt, which stems from the fear of authority and the superego that determines the conscience.

3. Social Intuitionism Theory

According to Haidt, two of the most vital questions in moral psychology are: 1. Where do moral beliefs and motivations come from? 2. How do moral judgments work? According to Haidt, once these two questions are clarified, all other questions of moral psychology will be easily solved. Concerning these two questions, Haidt puts forward a set of more systematic views and arguments, which Haidt himself names as "social intuitionism" (social intuitionism).

3.1. The Working Model of Moral Judgment

In Haidt's theory, the theory of moral sources and the theory of the working mode of moral judgment are intertwined and cannot be separated, and a theory of the working mode of moral judgment is put forward. This model is called the "social intuitionist model" (SIM). This model directly demonstrates the relationship between the moral intuition, moral judgment, and moral reasoning of individual judges, as well as the interaction between different judges. For illustrative purposes, Haidt uses a diagram (below) in various articles:

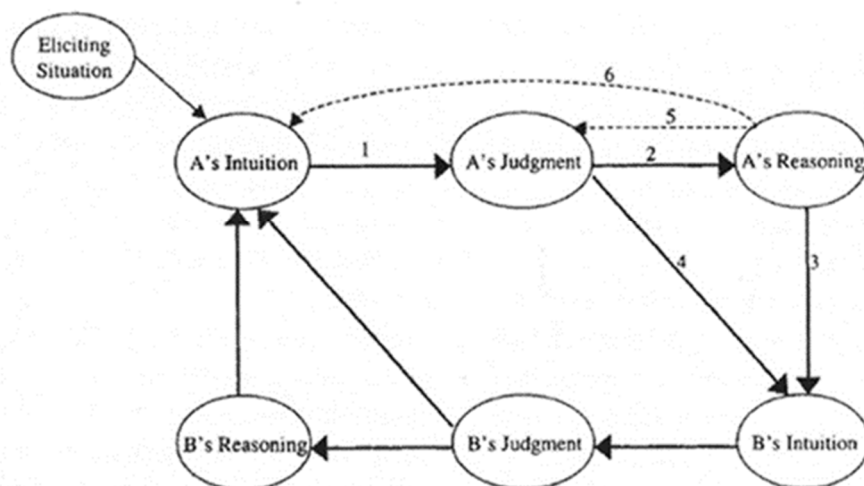


Figure 1. The Working Mode of Moral Judgment

Link 1 represents the "intuitive judgment. According to Haidt, the evaluative intuition that occurs as soon as we are stimulated by a morally significant evocative situation (e.g., seeing an act of violence) is called "moral intuition." Haidt defines moral intuition as "the sudden presentation of evaluative feelings (likes-dislikes, good or bad) about a person's character or actions in or on the verge of consciousness, without the subject being aware of going through the steps of searching for, weighing evidence, or deducing conclusions." Moral judgment, on the other hand, is "criticism or praise that involves the conscious experience of a belief in the rightness or wrongness of an action (Haidt, J, 2008).

Link 2 represents the "additional reasoning session after the fact. According to Haidt, under certain evocative situations, people make moral judgments intuitively without thinking or reasoning, but when moral judgments are formed, people may feel the need to justify their moral judgments, so it is the moral judgment first, followed by moral reasoning so that moral reasoning is said to be "post hoc" (post hoc). "(post hoc).

Link 3 represents the "persuasive aspect of reasoning." It occurs between individuals, not within an individual. Reasoned persuasion is the moral persuasion that people engage in with each other through discourse. It is a very common phenomenon in human society. Haidt absorbed some of the views of other psychologists and philosophers on language, moral discourse (moral discourse) that the purpose of moral discourse is not to search for truths, but to exert influence on other people's concepts, to show their correctness to others, as well as to reach a moral consensus within the community (this consensus is conducive to the coordination and cooperation within the community).

Link 4 represents a social persuasion session. Like rational persuasion, social persuasion occurs between individuals. But, there is a difference in that while the rational session uses language as a tool, the social persuasion session uses factors other than language. Psychological research has found that people are very receptive to influences from other people.

Psychological research has found that people are very susceptible to influences from others. For instance, people automatically and unconsciously mimic the posture, mannerisms, and facial expressions of the people with whom they are interacting, and this mimicry leads to the other person liking the mimic more. It is called the "chameleon effect" (Chartrand, 1999). Haidt suggests that this psychological trait is also manifested in the moral domain, where people's moral psychology is easily influenced by external factors. That is to say, persuaded by the situation.

Link 5 represents the reasoned judgment link. By reasoned judgment, we refer to moral judgments based on reasoning rather than intuition. It is true that people sometimes reach judgments by overcoming intuition and by the force of pure logic.

Link 6 represents the personal reflection link, which, like the judgment link of reasoning, starts from the human reasoning activities, but differs in that it does not lead directly to a specific moral judgment, but rather points to moral intuition, i.e., to reflection on one's moral intuitions through the reasoning activity. According to Haidt, "Once there is a conflict between intuitions, or on occasions when one lacks intuitions at all (e.g., when one is confronted with some public policy about which one knows little and has no viewpoint of one's own), implicit personal reflection becomes necessary. This reflective activity can have some impact on moral

intuitions.

4. Summarize

There is still a long way to go in the study of moral psychology, and only by continuously quenching this seed full of substance can we guide our education and life more effectively. We hope that theoretical researchers and educators will pay more positive attention to moral psychology.

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