Sociology in Morality and Its Priority on Sociology of Morality

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Abstract

In this paper, the subject of sociology of morality and its main issues are examined. Topics such as relation between class and morality، power and morality، economy and morality، ideal ethics and real ethics and relation between ethics and traditional society and modern Society. In the next step meaning of sociology of morality separated from sociology of ethical knowledge and finally meaning of "sociology in morality ", as most innovative part of paper for the first time defined, and justified.

Key words: Sociology; Ethics; Ethical theory; Ethical knowledge

1. Introduction:

Sociology of morality is interdisciplinary field that has new issues and little by little has attracted the attention of both sociologists and moral philosophers than past times.

The basic precondition to find a solution for promotion of moral status in communities is the evaluation of the level of morality. This is sociological studies on moral institutions and relations and again the condition of this one is to provide the precise definition of sociology of morality and explain its matters and benefits, to have finally an academic or/and research field as guidance for theoretical studies on statistical information from public morality. Main discussions of this approach are:

1.1 The Relationship between Common Morality of Society and Its Social Structure

A few fundamental questions in this matter are: 1. is there any particular social structure that has more or better moral capacity. 2. Is there any direct or inverse and strong or weak relationship between morality and society from the perspective of easy or hard moral life? 3. Is there any specific moral system that is more appropriate for society and its structure or we can generally perform any kind of moralities in society?

1.2 The Relationship between Class and Morality

The most significant theoretical research in this theme is belonging to Marx but not necessarily best of them. He was the one who for first time interpreted all social actions and reactions with the class conflict [1], and in this case, some issues are needed to more reflection. For example, what is the class and meaning and method of separation and division the sections of the people? (1) The other one is that how much the features of a class affects the people in moral thinking and behavior in comparison with the other classes as far as we need to talk about moral class or classes? (2) And the other one is that do morality of a class _for instance middle class_ in all societies is the same or it has some distinctions? (3)

1.3 The Relationship between Power and Morality

There are many different definitions of Power in social science that the most common of them includes: 1.power as a political system.2.power as a force and person or institution that has a force.3.power as an influential person or institution in society that has a vast sphere and there are many opinions about it [2, 3].

According to our definition of power, its relation with morality has different meanings but for discussing 1 and 2, they are concerned to politics; and 3 is more related to social psychology [4]. If we agree that power includes any intentional influence and superiority on the others [5, 6]. finally we accept that there are many meanings of power and moral power.

1.4 The Relationship between Economy and Morality

Perhaps the most complex social and human relations in modern world are economical issue and this causes ethical analysis of economy to be difficult. One of the main questions about this subject is that whether the economy/ economic system should be more ethical or morality should be more economical? For instance in some liberal and capitalistic views, ethics must adapt itself with economy and not vice versa [7, 8].

In other words, which economic system is more appropriate for moral life and which ethical system is more compatible for economical life? Accurate answers to these questions are keys to finding the meaning and object of economy and morality [9].

A. The scale of compatibility of ideal and institutional ethics in society

B. Traditional or modern society and morality [10, 11].

It should be noted that the moral sociologists can focus mostly on fundamental and influential sections of society includes: family, politics, economy, and religion for increasing the accuracy.

2 Sociology of Morality and Sociology of Ethical Knowledge

Knowledge in traditional views is quite subjective and individualistic but in new views its impacts and effects causes the knowledge to be necessary for sociological analyses (Stark.1958) and in some radical opinions knowledge is seen as a culture [12].
Ethical knowledge is subject of sociology/ sociology of knowledge and in minimal or radical opinions related to society [13].
The main point is that the subject of moral sociology is not moral actions and reactions that situated in society in objective form but moral sociology exactly studies the moral objective relations that are made by formal behavior. These conducts necessarily are not consistent with ideal and claimed moral theories; in other words, meaning of morality in sociology of morality is not ethical theory but is morality in practice or practical ethics.

2.1 Sociology of Morality_ in_

Sociology of morality in sport, media, economy, education, and many other branches of professional or applied ethics helps researchers to improve the accuracy of research but when we, for example, face the term of sociology of morality in science, we conclude that this study is related to level and position of ethics in scientific institutions, researches, and relations [14, 15].
However, it should not be confused with sociology "in" morality, which it will be discussed later.

2.2 Moral Sociology

The aim of sociology in morality is that if a clear sociological view_ even there is no obvious view_ in ethical theory existed, what are its limits and impacts? In fact, does social form and structure of moral agents change the ethical judgments of them? In other words, sometimes we analyze social impacts of one moral opinion by sociology even if these impacts are not consistent with claims and norms of that moral opinion but the purpose of sociology in morality is to make clear social status and its effects on moral theory.
Sociology in morality unlike sociology of morality is not sociological study_ although it uses many of its materials and information [16, 17]; it want to show that what social view is located in foundation of moral systems and what is the significance and impact of requirements and conversions of community in theory.
If we want to show practical reflection of ethical theory in society, in fact, we have entered into field of sociology of morality but the aim of sociology in morality is to understand the society position and explore the sociological approach, which is situated in theory regardless of its practical impact in society.
For instance, we may conclude that in Kantian moral theory, society and its divisions does/ should not have any effect on moral judgments. This is sociology in Kant's ethics but if we go beyond this field and want to analyze the possibility of Kant's ethics in society and its dimensions, in fact, we have turned to sociology of Kant's ethics and perhaps our results of research is incompatible with goals and norms of Kantian view.
Finally, we can say sociology of morality wants to know what the impact of morality on society is but sociology in morality wants to know what is the impact of the society on morality. This study approach through understanding the sociological principles and assumptions that is located in moral systems, which tries to assess the difference of current sociological status with those principles and assumptions and thereby opens the way to correct or improve the ethical theory [18, 19].
Obviously sociological vision and components, which are laid in moral theories, are different from social norms and rules derived from these theories. It is true that one of the best ways to understand the sociological vision, is the analysis of these norms, but sociology in morality seeks a more fundamental and deep conception. It even wants to find sociological roots in individual norms and values of moral theories; because one sociological opinion not only will affect the social norms but also affect the individual norms.
As a preliminary summary unlike the sociology of morality, sociology in morality is:
First, it is a part of moral philosophy and not sociology (emphasizing on the word "in" confirms that this study is a process "within" the scope of research ethics).
Second, in terms of background, it is rather new and more innovative
Third, in term of subject, it follows the feedbacks and reflections of social visions and views in morality and not the feedbacks and reflections of morality in society.
Given the foregoing discussion of our arguments, for proving the necessity of sociology in morality, it follows:
First, base on researches' results of sociology of Knowledge and even according to minimalistic approach in this field [20]. it should endorse that theories and theorists are affected by sociological views and social structures regardless of its "amount and type."
Second, even if a small part of rules, aims, and norms of a moral theory were in contrast with a particular society or a sociological vision, inevitably the moral agents, who are following the theory, will have difficulty to operate their morality.
Third, for solving this dilemma the best way is the analysis of the effects and reflections of the social construction on the theories/ theorists and compare it with the social positions and sociological views of moral agents in the present or a particular society that we have called it sociology in morality.

2.3 The Necessity of the Sociology in Morality

When a sociologist/sociologist of morality tries to study the relationships between society and morality by sociological methods and tools, at least several approaches can be obtained by the results of his/her research:
1. Society based approach
This view consider the scale of moral/ anti-moral attitudes of society and its sympathy or hostility toward a moral theory and base on its popularity tries to criticize the theory and tell of its defects or even the necessity to reject it or by being sure of the majority's confirmations with that ethical theory confirms its accuracy and power.
 Utilitarianism, Contractualism and ideas that generally know the society or person effective in the formulation of ethics, are more willing to this approach because these views have not any alternatives for beliefs of person or the majority. Although they claim that they can morally criticize the conducts of person or the society, regarding their theoretical foundations, when person or majority of society selects another way, they should follow them. Therefore for example John Stuart Mill as a utilitarian theorist, repeatedly emphasizes on this point [21]. and finally the contemporary Contractualists such as John Rawls selects the decision and agreement of society in specific way for justification of ethics [22].
2. Ethics based approach
This attitude tries a sympathetic approach toward ethical theory and a critical approach toward society and by assuming the validity of this theory, only survey the level of moral commitments in society without checking the practical successes of it in public. Those who believe in religious ethics or the sanctity of ethics and also those who know their theories superior for any reason _ including its rational preferences regardless of its publicity, interests and reactions _ although we will see there is not logical commitments between religious ethics and ethics based approach.
Combinational approach

This view instead of monotonic vision to morality or society attempts to explain the distance between social facts and ethics by a pathologic and critical attitude. It should have:

First: multi factor vision and not single factor one

Second: sympathetic and critical vision to morality and society

Third: case-by-case study and not general one

In fact in this approach neither society is absolute criterion nor morality, by with choosing a fair method, social facts sometimes justified by weakness of moral will (1) sometimes by weakness of moral structure in society(2) and sometimes by weakness of ethical theory(3).

By the first case which is related to topics of psychology of ethics , and by checking the distance between moral motivation and moral action and issues such as will, habit and even the mind, we trying to find the reason for the lack of moral commitment [23].

By the second case although again we observe the weakness of moral will, we study this fault in a larger frame and we assume that the moral weakness is affected by weakness of social structure and we do not address every responsibility and fault to the person in the society.

By the third case, we directly criticize the theory but to be sure that we do not impair theories for practical, non-structural and solvable problems, initially it is necessary to test previous cases in each ethical issue.

The main point is that all approaches and specifically combinational approach need sociology in morality although they are part of a moral sociology.

In fact, the sociology in morality by answering these two questions paves the way for assessment of moral status; otherwise, sociologist or ethics scholar cannot identify the society and morality without sociology in morality and also cannot correctly find the weak point and be fair in judgment between moral theories and social facts.

According to all previous points, it can be said sociology in morality is a research field that:

One: explain the amount of social construction's impact on ethical theory/ theorist,

Two: describe the amount of compatibility and requirement between norms, goals, and methods of one ethical theory and a particular social structure.

A moral philosopher or ethic scholar that preferably in terms of sociology have sufficient information and vision and try to help the sociology of morality and display the hidden roots and dimensions of ethical theories should do that.

3. Sociology in "Religious Morality"

Believers who think their ethical theory is sacred because that is part of religion and cannot be changed, may conclude that sociology in morality will distort their religion by the development of relationship between religious ethics and facts that is not
necessarily commensurate with divine commands and lead to attenuate the core or one of the main components of religion.

It seems that this worry is caused by lack of sufficient accuracy in the meaning of sociology in morality because this investigative attitude equally can implicitly lead to a change in religious ethics and the same amount has the capacity for more perception of religion and its finer points. In other word when sociology in morality comes to ethical theory's field, it only wants to display the rate and type of connection between the society and morality in age of establishment of religion and prove the relationship between religious ethics and social variables, which is not a convincing reason for reform in ethical theory.

Do not forget that there is a long way to reach the reform in ethical theory based on historical and social requirements and specifically several conditions must be provided. These conditions are respectively:

A: prove the compatibility between a part of the morality and a society or social structure (by sociology in morality).

B: prove the impossibility or difficulty of the actual part of morality in current society (by sociology of morality).

C: prove that the distance between the facts and values not caused by weakness of moral will but the effect of new society's changes (By psychology of morality).

D: insure that proposed alternative for correct or updated ethical theory is in accordance with its general structure and does not disrupt the integration and performance of other sections of theory (by moral study).

As you can see the fulfillment of one the four conditions is related to sociology in morality and it should struggle with sociology of morality, psychology of morality and ethical studies.

4. Conclusion

Finally, with regard to all expressed topics, condition of moral sociology with deep and diagnostic vision for analysis the ethical status is in the hand of sociology in morality. Perhaps statistical sociology, which just represents statics and reality of society, does not need sociology in morality but analytical sociology that following the causes of events should not ignore the information that is obtained from sociology in morality because studying the moral status of society is incomplete without reflection of moral theory that is prevalent in societ

For instance if we do not know what is an ideal society in Islamic ethics and what society is compatible with Islamic morality, accordingly we do not know that what are the social problems of an Islamic country and how much they are concerned with ethical theories and how these problems which are in the minds and perspectives of Muslims are bad and immoral?

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