

On The Paradoxical Nature Of Moral Systems

Hannes Thorsell

September 12, 2016

In this essay I will propose the idea that all moral systems are neither objective nor subjective. Since it is the case for any thing or idea that it must be either objective or subjective this causes a paradox. First I will define what is meant by a moral system, give some brief history and examples of different moral systems and their paradoxes, and finally conjecture upon the inherent property of paradoxicality in such systems.

Let us begin by defining a *moral system*. By this I mean all religious, political, ethical, moral, and similar systems that seek to guide human behaviour. The latter is what is common to all such systems, and the previously mentioned are simply examples of such. Essentially if a system can define right and wrong, or good and bad, it falls under this definition. I will leave the argument against the idea of objective moral systems to another time, and another author, since so many great pieces have been written on this already, and I'd much rather keep this as succinct as possible. So to clarify further, all moral systems will therefore be subjective, and the work is then left to show that they too cannot exist.

Over human history many moral systems have been proposed, but all so far seem to be paradoxical in nature. I will list a few examples. Let us begin with the idea of Liberty and Freedom. A ready paradox recognized (but not resolved by) Bakunin is as follows, "Should a man be free to consent to chattel slavery?". If yes, then he is not free, for he is a slave. If no, then he is not free, because he is not allowed to make a choice. Furthermore moral systems that have grown out of this such as Libertarianism, particularly Anarcho-Capitalism have even more paradoxes, since they do not only share their fathers' issues, but have issues of their own. For example, "Should a man be free to remove the freedom of another man?". Again, if yes, then the society is not free. If no, then the society is not free. Often paradoxes like these are shoved aside by introducing arbitrary new ideas, such as the policy of non-aggression. However, such solutions are ad-hoc, and arbitrary. They do not solve the paradox, for it always fails to justify itself by its own moral system. It cannot. If it could, there would be no reason to introduce it separately, since it could have been argued from the principles set out in the moral system itself. So if it does not come from the moral system it tries to correct, and since it by definition is a moral system itself, by our earlier definition, as it guides human behaviour, it is indeed a separate moral system, which, as you will later see, means it too has

the inherent problem of being paradoxical.

Since both systems, call the system A and system B are paradoxical by nature, either the argument will be circular, with system A correcting system B, and vice versa, or we will get an infinite regression of paradoxical systems correcting each other, one after another. Both of these are absurd, obvious to anyone who has even the most fundamental grasp of logic.

There are many more examples to be found in history LIST MORE EXAMPLES HERE

But let us now move to the principle question, and what is the main conjecture of this essay; that the paradoxical nature present in the above mentioned moral systems is not particular to each of those systems, but is instead an *inherent property* of *all* moral systems. For it is either the case that there exists at least one non-paradoxical subjective moral system, and it has yet to be discovered by man, or there exists none. If such a system was easy to discover or create, it would have been done already, given the time and effort many great men have put into this endeavour. (((ETHICS BY THAT ITALIAN DUDE REFERENCE HERE))). So therefore it either does not exist, or is especially difficult to discover. I am of the opinion that no such system exists. My proof(s) is given below.

Let us intermittently agree that a paradoxical system cannot be, and therefore must be thrown out. This already has us discard all so-far discovered moral systems.

Argument 1: The definition of good and evil Since all moral systems must guide human behaviour they must all be able to classify good actions from evil actions. But since we already agree all moral systems are subjective, they must also define these terms subjectively. Doing so they must draw upon other moral systems for their definitions. This is circular. As such there can be no good definition of good and evil that creates a non-paradoxical moral system, unless those definitions were drawn from a non-paradoxical moral system. But since moral systems that share the fundamental definitions of right and wrong, or good and evil will both create the same system, they are not only interchangeable, they are, in all but semantics, the exact same system. As such there can only be, if it exists, one non-paradoxical moral system. But if that is the case, and only one system exists, then by it being the only one, it is by definition objective, and we already know such a system does not exist. So therefore there exists no non-paradoxical subjective moral system, which means all of them have to be discarded, which in turn means that there are no objective systems of morality, and no subjective systems of morality.

Since I can't even define good or bad.