Research on the Dilemma between Individual Rationalization and Community Orderliness: Take the COVID-19 as an Example

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Abstract: The COVID-19, which broke out in Wuhan at the beginning of 2020 and then hit the whole country, fully exposed the dilemma between the rational action of individuals and the order required by the community. However, behind this practical dilemma, there is actually a deeper theoretical problem, that is, whether people are atomic individuals or members of the community. This dilemma limits the possible strategies for overcoming it. Specifically, for the rationalization of human beings and the orderliness of the community, the possible strategies can not be achieved by negating one of the two, but can only be regulatory. The academic review of the concept of community indicates that this regulation is both possible and realistic: on the one hand, the construction of the community needs to be strengthened, making it a "big family" that is subjectively recognized by its members, and on the other hand, the community consciousness of its members needs to be cultivated. This cultivation requires both educational intervention and the establishment of a platform for the community to build its members' sense of ownership through the construction of the entity level.

Keywords: COVID-19, Rationalization; Community; Order

1. Introduction

At the beginning of 2020, a new coronavirus began to spread from Wuhan, and then attacked the whole country. In order to do a good job in epidemic prevention and control, cut off the transmission routes of the virus, and curb the spread of the epidemic, Wuhan announced a "lockdown" on January 23. Starting from this, a situation has emerged where all Chinese people join hands to fight the epidemic together. All Chinese people, as a community, have shown considerable orderliness in order to win in the war against COVID-19. However, at the same time, the actions taken by many individuals based on rational calculation have brought considerable challenges to this orderliness, causing various difficulties for the country to achieve victory in the war against the epidemic. This situation itself highlights the dilemma between the rationalization of individuals and the orderliness of community, and understanding and overcoming this dilemma has become a topic that the theoretical community needs to face directly.

Herein, by taking the COVID-19 broke out in Wuhan as a typical example, the dilemma between the individual rationalization and community orderliness was analyzed and discussed. And some insightful suggestions was also proposed.

2. The Appearance of Difficulties: Phenomenon Description

Faced with the rapid spread of COVID-19, Wuhan issued a notice on January 23, 2020. The content of the notice above-mentioned is that since 10:00 this day, the city's public transport, subways, ferries and long-distance passenger transport have been suspended. without special reasons, citizens should not leave Wuhan, and the airport and railway station passages from Wuhan have been temporarily closed. This measure is known as the "Wuhan lockdown" by the public. Subsequently, other relevant cities in Hubei also issued similar announcements, and other provinces and cities across the country have successively launched first level responses to major public health emergencies. The situation of preventing and treating the epidemic together among the entire Chinese people has been formed.

Undoubtedly, all Chinese people in this epidemic have formed a community. As is well known, the concept of "community" is a

"internet celebrity" in current academic community. Heated discussions about this concept can be observed in sociology, political philosophy, ethnology, ethics, and philosophy of science, although the meaning of the concept of community varies in these disciplines. It is generally believed that ancient Greek philosophy, especially Aristotle's ideas, is one of the important intellectual resources for the concept of community. According to Aristotle, everyone is pursuing a certain good, and when all members of a group are pursuing a common good, the group can be called a community [1]. That is to say, having a common goal (goodness, interests) is the basic social condition for a group of people to form a community [2]. According to this standard, when COVID-19 began to break out in China, all Chinese people formed a community in the following sense, that is to say, if COVID-19 could not be controlled in Hubei (especially Wuhan), then the whole China would be threatened by the virus. Therefore, the victory of the war against the epidemic was not only related to Hubei (especially Wuhan) people, but also closely related to all Chinese people, and therefore became the common goal of all Chinese people.

It can be seen that in order to win the war against COVID-19, all the Chinese people, as a community, have shown considerable orderliness and made their own contributions or sacrifices to the best of their ability. Such as, the "self destructed" closure of Hubei (especially Wuhan), the successive dispatch of medical teams from other provinces and cities across the country to help Hubei, the contribution of all sectors of society to support Hubei, the suspension of work of various enterprises and public institutions, the self isolation of the people of the country in response to the governments' call, and so on. It should be said that this orderliness is the expected meaning of a community, because the state of disorder usually comes from two situations as follows. One is that individual behavior is random and purposeless, and the other is that although individual behavior has its purpose, they are not the same. The group of people composed of individuals in these above-mentioned two situations, according to the previous definition of "community", is not a community.

However, during the COVID-19 pandemic, many phenomena deviating from the aforementioned order were also observed. First, before and after the announcement of the closure of Wuhan, 5 million of the 14 million people in the city chose to "flee", which greatly reduced the effect of the closure of the city to cut off the transmission route of the virus. In particular, some of those who "fled" also had obvious symptoms of fever and cough among those infected with COVID-19. Second, after the outbreak of COVID-19, people rushed to hospitals to compete for medical resources in Wuhan, which led to the frequent occurrence of large-scale crowd gathering and cross infection, and exacerbated the severity of the COVID-19. Thirdly, after the announcement of the lockdown in Wuhan was released, residents across the country began to scramble for masks and businesses raised mask prices. In Wuhan, there were even incidents of residents scrambling for vegetables and daily necessities, with the latter's prices being inflated. In addition, various rumors were rampant, and some individuals (institutions) clearly benefited from these rumors. Fourth, the COVID-19 has expanded and intensified the internal division of the whole Chinese community. This may be due to people's different views and judgments on this event (this factor is particularly apparent in people's WeChat groups and WeChat friends circle, for which relatives and friends quarrel and even break up) [3], or it may be due to people's fear of COVID-19, such as fear and discrimination against outsiders (especially people from Hubei) shown throughout the country. These phenomena, on the one hand, have had a significant impact on the nationwide orderly war against the epidemic, causing various difficulties for the country to achieve victory in the war against the epidemic. On the other hand, they also pose challenges to the community itself, because a community not only has external standards such as common good (goals), but also requires internal standards such as the subjective identity of its members. However, all of these phenomena are inducing others to ask whether the actions of the parties involved in these phenomena are like those of a community member? The question arises: are we still part of the same community as these people?

Are some of the above phenomena due to the

individual moral qualities of the agent? Of course, there is! However, attributing the dilemma faced by the orderliness of the community to individual moral qualities and attempting to solve this dilemma through research on education topics such as "how to enhance people's ideological and moral values" will undoubtedly hit the wrong target. In fact, in any community, the moral standards of its members will certainly vary. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, many nasty phenomena and individuals were observed, but many noble actions were also seen, such as medical staff and auxiliary police officers risking their lives to remain on the front line [4]. More importantly, in the above phenomenon, the vast majority of parties take action with self-interest as their main consideration, rather than harming others. That is to say, they are engaged in actions that they believe can maximize their own interests, and whether this action will harm the interests of others is not a consideration. For example, most of the 5 million people who fled to Wuhan may have the idea that if they (and their families) are not patients with COVID-19, leaving Wuhan can greatly reduce their (and their families) chances of being infected. If a person (or their family) is already a patient (or infected during the incubation period), better treatment can be received by them when they go to another city, without staying in Wuhan and competing with other patients for scarce medical resources. Leaving Wuhan is beneficial for oneself (and one's family), regardless of the situation [5]. These 5 million people who knowingly wander outside, aware of their infection, should not be imagined. The concept of 'punishing people with their hearts' was originally anti-communist. If the previous statement holds true, then the behavior of people in the above phenomenon fully applies to the concept "rationalization" used by Max Weber to describe modernity. In short, the behavior of people in the above phenomenon is not due to the low moral quality of the actors, but rather their rational behavior, that is to say, by calculating and taking action, they maximize their own interests.

However, in this way, a dilemma arises, namely, achieving victory in the war is the goal of the community, and to achieve this goal, members of the community need to defend and govern together, each performing their own duties and making their own contributions and sacrifices. In short, orderliness is required. However, as rational individuals, the rational actions of community members often go against this orderliness. How to get out of this predicament? To answer this question, the essence of this dilemma first needs to be understood.

3. The Essence of the Dilemma

In fact, the above-mentioned practical difficulties highlight a deep-seated theoretical challenge. Simply saying, according to Max Weber, the transformation of the West from traditional society to modern society is a comprehensive process of rationalization in all aspects of society (human rationalization is one of the aspects), and here rationality is mainly instrumental rationality. Due to the assumption that humans are atomic individuals, rationalization is fundamentally incompatible with the concept of community, namely, according to the latter, humans are not atomic individuals, but members of the community. As members of the community, individuals will not only rationally calculate their own gains and losses when acting, but will prioritize the goals of the community. Is a person an atomic individual or a member of a community? Both cannot be embraced simultaneously because they are conceptually incompatible. However, giving up on either side comes at a heavy cost, not only in theory but also in practice. Let's start from the concept of community to explore this difficult problem. As mentioned earlier, the study of communities is a current trend in academia. Various concepts of "community" have been observed to emerge by adding specific qualifiers before the word "community". The editor of the Encyclopedia of Communities once commented on this phenomenon, "We live in an era where the demand for communities is growing, while at the same time feeling that communities are declining. However, people have never worked so hard to build, revive, find, and study communities as they do today. [5]" It is precisely this, namely, the revival of the concept of communities highlights a series of paradoxical situations that humans face in a fully rationalized modern society. Regarding these situations, Weber provided a considerable description, for example, the rationalization of economic life

(economic rationalization) has led to an economic order that "determines the life of every person born into this mechanism with an irresistible force" [6], while political rationalization and organizational rationalization have led to another form of control.

Why does the modernization process lead to such problems? The reason may lie in the opposition between value rationality and instrumental rationality. In short, modern Western capitalism emphasizes instrumental rationality unilaterally, leading to the entire world being controlled by the logic of instrumental rationality. Value rationality continues to shrink in the expansion of instrumental rationality, and the entire society (in Marcuse's words) has become a "one-sided society" [7]. Weber and the subsequent Frankfurt School have systematically and deeply criticized this. The question is how to restore the role of value rationality in modern society? The criticism of instrumental rationality is certainly necessary, but the theoretical assumption of liberalism that individuals are atomic entities and are connected through contracts between people is also an important foundation for cutting off the blood ties and warmth between people, thus causing instrumental rationality to "kill all directions" and value rationality to constantly shrink. Therefore, it also needs to be deeply reflected upon. It is here that the concept of community holds great significance.

The concept of community was revived in the 1980s by a group of people represented by MacIntyre, Sandel, and Taylor in their criticism of neoliberalism. The political philosophy trend that emerged among this group of people is called "communitarianism" (also translated as "communitarianism"). However, the concept of community has a long history and is generally believed to have two main intellectual resources. One is the ancient Greek philosophy mentioned earlier, especially Aristotle's thoughts. According to Aristotle, humans are born as political animals, suitable for living in a city-state (which is a community). Although in terms of time, the individual precedes the family, and the family precedes the city-state, from an ontological perspective, the city-state precedes both the family and the individual [1]. The second is modern sociology, especially the ideas of Tunnis, Weber, and others. In the book "Community and Society", Tennis made a famous distinction between "community" and "society" [8], namely, the family is the prototype of pure community, while big cities are the prototype of pure society. The community is built on the basis of bonds such as blood, geography, and friendship, so social relations are natural and organic, while society is built on abstract contractual (including political and economic contracts) bonds, so social relations are mechanical and unnatural. In a community, people reach consensus through default agreement and harmonious unity. In society, reaching consensus relies on agreements and contracts. In short, "in the community, despite various separations, there is still unity in society, despite various combinations, there is still separation. [9]" Advocates of social unity have fully absorbed the above ideological resources, believing that goodness cannot be pursued, nor virtue exercised, solely as an individual [10]. This is partially because what constitutes a good life will change with changes in the environment. Not only do different individuals live in different social environments, but all of people also regard the environment as a carrier of their specific social identity. In short, everyone has to be in a social community and use their membership to discover their moral identity and determine their moral identity. Common goodness can be discovered only within and as members of a community. The community is relied upon by everyone.

Obviously, from the above discussion, the conclusions can be drawn as follows. Firstly, the community is organic and the true form of human living together, while society is mechanical and artificial, the manifestation of human living together. Secondly, humans are members of a community, not only at the family level, but also at a larger scale (such as in city states). Thirdly, as a member of the community, the individual constitutes a characterization of their identity, and therefore, the community precedes the individual. If these statements are correct, and if individuals truly view their relationship with the community in this way when taking action, then it can be seen how the role of instrumental rationality in individual actions will be greatly limited. For example, in the COVID-19 epidemic, if those who "fled" to

Wuhan understood their relationship with the community in this way, they would not only consider the benefits of this action to themselves, but also (even give priority to) consider the good of the community, and measure the possible impact of their actions on the community. This means that instrumental rationality is suppressed, while value rationality is highlighted. Obviously, this situation will bring about the order of the community we hope to get.

It seems that one of the ways to obtain the orderliness of a community is to deny the atomistic individual and rebuild people's belief in themselves as members of the community. The problem is that this is purely theoretical speculation, which not only comes at a heavy cost in theory, but is also impractical in practice due to its opposition to historical trends. On a theoretical level, it is well known that since the European Enlightenment, the concept of freedom has deeply penetrated people's hearts and been revered as one of the most precious values of humanity. In the past few centuries, many authoritarian countries with order but no freedom have been seen bringing profound suffering to humanity, which makes the value of freedom even more precious. At the practical level, as Max Weber deeply understood, the transformation from traditional society to modern society is a process of comprehensive rationalization of all aspects of society. In the past few hundred years, this modernization process has completely changed the form of human society and also changed humanity itself. As early as the late 19th century, when Tönnies published "The Community and Society," he had already seen this clearly. He talked about how modern capitalism - civil society - has created a new kind of personality, who is skilled in calculation, uses reason to measure the possibility of using means to achieve their goals, and pursues happiness [9]. Currently, more than a hundred years later, this personality that is proficient in calculation and full of rationality is only more obvious and prominent, rather than the opposite. In this situation, it is undoubtedly unrealistic to make people abandon this personality and prioritize seeing themselves as members of the community, with action considerations taking precedence over the values of the community.

As far as China is concerned, since the Opium War, the elite class in China has gradually reached a consensus that China needs to enter modern society. The reform and opening up in 1978 greatly promoted this process, with the introduction of market economy, the promulgation of property rights law, and other measures encouraging people to improve their situation through rational actions. At present, it is evident that China has not fully entered modern society, and various aspects of society still retain typical characteristics of traditional society. This means that the modernization movement needs to be further promoted, specifically, the rationalization of various aspects of social order, rather than the opposite. Therefore, the dilemma between human rationalization and the orderliness of the community cannot be overcome by simply denying human rationalization.

4. The Path out of the Predicament

Since the tense relationship between human rationalization and any party in the community cannot be resolved by negating them, the only way to solve the problem is through moderation, that is, to achieve a "reconciliation" between the rational thinking actions of people and the orderliness required by the community through a systematic approach. Obviously, the possibility of such "reconciliation" depends on two aspects: on the one hand, the construction of the community, that is, the construction of the community into a true "big family" that its members identify with and live together. On the other hand, a series of methods are used to cultivate the value rationality and community consciousness of community members, so that they not only rationally consider their own gains and losses when taking action, but also take into account and even prioritize the goals of the community. As far as COVID-19 is concerned, it can be seen that many areas need improvement in the above two aspects, which to a large extent led to the difficulties discussed in this article. Therefore, such improvement should be chosen as our path to overcome these difficulties.

In terms of community, at least two dimensions of problems can be seen as follows. One is the issue of capability. As mentioned earlier, on the eve of the lockdown in Wuhan, 5 million out of 14 million people chose to "escape" Wuhan after rational consideration.

This means that at least a considerable portion of these 5 million people hold negative answers to the following question, namely, if they are infected, can they receive good treatment? If the right to survival is a fundamental human right, it is understandable that these people have taken the action of "escaping" Wuhan due to their negative answers to the above questions. Even among these 5 million people, it is easy to imagine that there will be many who hold a negative answer to the following question, namely, even if they are not infected, can their lives be basically guaranteed after staying in Wuhan, which has already been sealed off? Although it has nothing to do with life and death, people's expectations for a free and comfortable life should also be understood. It cannot be inferred from this that these people lack discipline and only have selfishness in their hearts. They are ordinary people. If it is noticed how the people who stayed in Wuhan (they are also ordinary people) responded to the government's call, cooperated with the work of relevant staff and made great contributions and sacrifices to the prevention and control of COVID-19 after the closure of Wuhan, it can be naturally thought that if those who "fled" Wuhan stayed in Wuhan, they can also show self-discipline and cooperation. If our horizon is broadened, it can be seen how Chinese enterprises and institutions, as well as all Chinese people, responded to the government's call to stop work or isolate themselves at home, making their own contributions and sacrifices to the prevention and control of COVID-19. Wuhan is a city of heroes, not just that, Chinese people are a group of heroic people. People usually say that Chinese system has a clear advantage, which is the ability to mobilize society. In the context of community, this actually means that Chinese people have a clear sense of community and a spirit of giving up some of their preferences for the goals of the community. Under such conditions, the ability of a community to guarantee its members' right to survival and basic living is the key to determining whether an individual's rational behavior will lead to the disorder of the community. From this point of view, there is still considerable room for improvement in the community. The problems in the epidemic prevention and control mechanism and social governance have been fully exposed in the COVID-19, requiring in-depth reflection and improvement. Of course, how to improve the mechanism and system of epidemic prevention and control, and how to strengthen and improve social governance, are not the contents of this article.

The second is the issue of "attitude". As mentioned earlier, one of the fundamental conditions for a group to become a community is the subjective identity of this group of people. This subjective identity can come from past education and training, as well as from the natural sense of intimacy, trust, and so on formed by living together. However, with rational intervention, the behavior of the community (spokesperson) can also affect the subjective identity of its members. In this regard, if members of the community do not believe that the community has the ability to safeguard their own interests, they will take actions that they consider beneficial to themselves, thereby disrupting the orderliness of the community. But more seriously, if the goals of the community (spokesperson) differ from those of the community members, or if the community members believe that their (reasonable) demands are not valued or even ignored by the community, their subjective identification with the community will be greatly shaken, providing sufficient reasons and motivation for their (at least for themselves) rational actions. It is known that after the outbreak of the COVID-19, the Wuhan municipal government and its subordinate organs were severely criticized, because the public opinion believed that in this epidemic, the local government paid great attention to major events and projects of appearance, but put the problems of interior and people's livelihood behind in decision-making sequencing and resource allocation. Regardless of whether the content of these public opinions is true or not, their impact is enormous, and they pose a serious crisis to the subjective identity of community members towards the community. How to ensure that the community (spokesperson) does not deviate from the common goals of the community in their actions? On this issue, since the spokespersons of the community may also be rational individuals, we need corresponding mechanisms and systems to ensure that their individual rational actions do

not violate the common goals of the community.

Let's take a look at the members of the community. Although it was mentioned earlier that it is understandable for individuals to leave Wuhan based on rational considerations and can not be simply regarded as the culprit of social disorder, the behavior of many individuals in this epidemic still clearly indicates that people's sense of community still needs to be strengthened. If leaving Wuhan before the lockdown was a rational behavior, then leaving Wuhan without self isolation, but traveling around and even visiting relatives and friends, is definitely a lack of community consciousness. In addition, during the severe epidemic period, the fear and discrimination towards outsiders (especially those from Hubei) shown across the country is also a manifestation of a lack of community consciousness. In response to this situation, cultivating and educating community members' sense of community and value rationality is also a necessary part of getting out of the predicament.

In theory, this is both possible and realistic. According to Li Rongshan's analysis, the status of the concept of community in social theory has undergone a gradual process of "downgrading" as follows [8]. In the view of Herder, a representative figure of the anti Enlightenment movement, community is the guiding principle. At Tennis' place, the community was "downgraded" to an existence parallel to and opposed to society. In the second half of the 19th century in the United States, the community was further "downgraded" and became an existence within society, with society becoming dominant. In this continuous process of "downgrading", the community gradually transformed from a tangible state to a desirable state, that is to say, in traditional society, the community was the basic form of society. With the advancement of modernization, the community gradually dissolved, and today "even the most natural family relationships have become 'selective intimate relationships' [11]". In this context, people attempt to revive and rebuild the community by realizing its value, but at this point, the community has become a goal we should pursue rather than something that actually exists. According to Tennis, in the community (traditional society), the link

between people is a naturally occurring relationship like mother and son, husband and wife, and brothers and sisters. In contrast, current community that people want to rebuild and revive has far exceeded the scope of the family and village community. Members of these communities cannot be connected based on the natural relationship of blood and geography. The link between them can only be the common ideal goal and value orientation. These things (as non natural) are in a sense acquired education.

Since the community currently under discussion (such as the Chinese national community and the community of shared destiny) is constructed in a sense, and the bond between people in the constructed community is something like a common goal and value orientation, it is necessary for our education to convey such value concepts to the members of the community in their growth process. Of course, the difficulty here lies in whether a public value can become the personal value of a community member in a situation where individuals have already rationalized, which often requires individual rational evaluation first. However, as proponents of social unity suggest, each of us is not an atomic individual, but a member of a community, which is the basic condition for us to determine our moral identity and discover our moral identity. This means that individuals do not inherently reject common goals and values, and their attitudes towards these things may be largely determined by the community they construct. This situation is demonstrated by the following comparison. Namely, in a true community, even if people act rationally, their actions will better balance the values and goals of the community, thus exhibiting a certain orderliness. In a so-called community, the situation is exactly the opposite. In other words, a true community must have already inputted its goals and values into the hearts of its members. Therefore, the role of instrumental rationality here is not decisive, but conditional. So, how to make the values and goals of the community deeply ingrained in the hearts of its members? As mentioned above, education is an important aspect, but the physical construction of the community is equally indispensable [12]. As mentioned earlier, the family is the prototype of a community. The ability of a family as a

community is certainly influenced by blood and geography, but it is not limited to those above-mentioned. Family members live together, and frequent (emotional, conceptual) communication connects them. The discussion and decision-making mechanisms on family matters give each member a sense of ownership and emotional experience. These are undoubtedly very important sources for family members to form subjective identification with the family community. By applying this to the construction of communities, the importance of enhancing members' sense of community will be realized. This includes physical construction, ensuring that community members can participate in the discussion and decision-making of public affairs, and making the public a subject of social governance. In Aristotle's discourse on the city-state as a community, this point is also of crucial significance, namely, a city-state as a community means that its members participate in debates about their lives and decisions about their city-state, and have the right to vote [13]. In this regard, through the innovation of mechanisms and systems, allowing community members to participate in the discussion and decision-making of community matters in social governance will endow them with an emotional experience of ownership, which undoubtedly plays a crucial role in cultivating their sense of community.

5. Conclusion

To summarize the previous discussion, we can make a simple summary as follows. Firstly, theoretically speaking, the rationalization of individuals presupposes that humans are atomic individuals, while the concept of community holds that humans are members of the community rather than atomic individuals. In this regard, the dilemma between the rationalization of individuals and the orderliness of communities that has emerged in this epidemic is actually a practical manifestation of a deep-seated theoretical problem.

Secondly, the way out of this dilemma can not negate either side of the dilemma, because community is the ideal and the goal we pursue, and human rationalization is the basic element of modernity. Currently, China is accelerating the pace of modernization, and the realization of this goal requires us to continue to promote

the rationalization of all aspects of society (including human rationalization).

Thirdly, the dilemma between the rationalization of individuals and the orderliness of the community can only be alleviated through regulation and can not be completely eliminated. As for the lower goal of easing, it is both possible and realistic: firstly, the construction of the community itself, making it a strong "big family" that takes into account individual goals and gains subjective recognition from individuals. The second is the cultivation of personal community consciousness, which not only relies on the education and training that community members will experience together, but also provides corresponding platforms through the physical construction of the community, so that community members can cooperate and work together, and gain emotional experiences as masters.

In short, it is impossible to completely eliminate the dilemma between the rationalization of individuals and the orderliness of the community. Suitable strategy is merely one of balance: to act with more "grace" while individuals maintain rationality.

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