

How can algorithms reshape benevolence? The technocratic turn, multiple effects and collaborative governance of digital platform philanthropy

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Abstract. Digital platform philanthropy is undergoing a technocratic turn: the regulatory object shifts from the behavioral compliance of charitable organizations to the output results of algorithmic models, and the regulatory logic transforms from the value judgment of "who deserves help" to data indicators derived from algorithmic operations. Drawing on theoretical resources from the sociology of technology, platform governance and the sociology of philanthropy, this paper reveals the three operational mechanisms of this turn—credit scoring, traffic allocation and automated traceability, analyzes its four induced effects—motivation narrowing, sympathy screening, responsibility shifting and compliance performance, examines the governance structure of platform dual roles, algorithmic transparency and accountability, and state-platform-society interaction, and explores directions for governance optimization from three dimensions: plural collaboration, procedural justice and diverse forms of philanthropy. The core proposition of this paper is that the real challenge of the technocratic turn lies not in how to make algorithms regulate benevolence more precisely, but in how to make algorithms serve the social goals of philanthropy through institutional development.

Keywords: digital platform philanthropy, technocratic turn, algorithmic regulation, collaborative governance, platform governance

1. Introduction

In 2022, Shuidichou upgraded its "Integrity File" system, incorporating social relationship density, information completeness and historical performance records of aid seekers into fundraising credibility scoring, and lowering the basic communication weight of fundraising links for those with "weak" social relationships. Alipay Love Points quantifies data such as donation frequency, scenario diversity and public welfare account activity into credit points circulating across scenarios. The platform's explanation is that social relationship density is a quantitative indicator for measuring real demand and fraud risk, and algorithms only automatically complete information screening for donors. However, the original promise of philanthropy—"helping those in need"—has in practice been replaced by "helping those deemed credible by algorithms". This replacement reflects a deep logical shift in the field of digital platform philanthropy, which this paper terms the technocratic

turn: a governance model that replaces political judgment and moral deliberation with the rational operation of technical systems.

Existing research has two blind spots in responding to this phenomenon. The technical narrative of digital philanthropy research focuses on information disclosure and efficiency improvement, emphasizing the instrumental effectiveness of communication tool innovation in enhancing organizational resource mobilization capacity and expanding the scope of public welfare impact [1]. According to a *China Social Affairs Daily* report on September 19, 2025, more than 140 products and core businesses of Tencent Group participate in public welfare, driving over 240 million person-times of participation [2]. However, if digital technology is merely regarded as an external tool for reducing transaction costs, it evades the key question of whether digital platforms have transformed from channel providers to standard-setters. Charity regulation research still takes organizational compliance and administrative regulations as its core framework, but the emergence of algorithmic regulation poses new challenges to this framework: regulation is no longer merely the constraint of legal provisions on organizational behavior, but is partially internalized into the operational logic of algorithms, making pre-judgments on who deserves to be helped. Theoretical resources from the philosophy of technology and the sociology of philanthropy provide analytical tools for this, but existing discussions have not yet incorporated algorithms themselves as a governance mechanism into the analytical perspective.

Most existing research on algorithms focuses on how to use technology to correct algorithmic biases, believing that through complex parameter design, technical rationality can approach the moral goals of philanthropy. Based on this, this paper raises the core question: is there an incommensurable tension between the computational rationality of technocracy and the moral attribute of philanthropy? The core thesis of this paper is that digital platform philanthropy is undergoing a technocratic turn driven by algorithms, which has changed the distribution of goodwill and exerted a profound impact on the normative order and governance structure of the philanthropy sector. The paper analyzes three questions in sequence: how algorithms introduce value assumptions in classification and screening, how to delineate the functional boundaries of platforms in digital philanthropy governance, and the challenges of the technocratic turn to the moral attribute of philanthropy. Rather than providing specific operational strategies, this paper focuses on providing a systematic theoretical framework for understanding this paradox and offering possible directions for future philanthropy governance.

2. Three operational mechanisms of the technocratic turn: credit scoring, traffic allocation and automated traceability

Digital platforms incorporate donation behaviors, aid needs and regulatory requirements into the same system for traceability and regulation through algorithmic logic, and classify people and sort matters accordingly. Algorithms have thus gradually evolved from purely auxiliary tools into three mechanisms for regulating benevolence, participating in and reshaping the participation patterns of philanthropy.

2.1. Credit scoring mechanism

Mechanisms such as Alipay's Love Points and Shuidichou's Credit Points quantify the public's credibility into specific numbers, while Tencent Charity's Little Red Flowers can be displayed in WeChat Status and classify users into levels based on their love value. On the surface, this is merely an extension of traditional credit reporting logic into the philanthropy field. In reality, however, this scoring system realizes the transformation of moral capital into digital capital. From the perspective of traditional sociology of philanthropy, the

"benevolence" of donors is a kind of moral capital accumulated in real-life practice, with ambiguous form, attached to specific social relations, and difficult to transfer across situations. The logic of the spirit of the gift revealed by Mauss shows the incalculability of reciprocity and moral obligations in social relations [3]. Yet in the algorithmic operational logic, funding for seriously ill children and donations to environmental projects can be converted into the same score unit. Zelizer put forward the concept of relational marking, pointing out that the public distinguishes the types, uses, users and distribution systems of money in different social relations [4]. Credit scoring creates precisely this kind of reconstruction: benevolence transforms from a moral attribute inherent in social relations into a digital asset external to the individual and circulatable across platforms.

In platform scenarios, classification has evolved from a statistical operation into a distribution mechanism. Algorithms classify the public into different categories according to standards and grant varying degrees of trust; those with high scores gain more convenience, while those with low scores are marginalized by the platform. Under algorithmic control, the classified usually do not know they have been categorized, let alone realize that it has changed their chances of receiving help.

2.2. Traffic allocation mechanism

Different from credit scoring which classifies people, traffic allocation algorithms sort aid-seeking projects. The core self-disciplinary logic of algorithms is the pursuit of efficiency and traffic maximization, which itself highly aligns with the commercialization needs of internet platforms [5]. Platform recommendations and traffic promotion are not random; before content is presented to the public, which acts of benevolence can be seen has already been determined by a rigorous system of algorithmic indicators. As shown in the "Beijing Blind Lane Staged Incident" reported by *Public Welfare Times* on May 29, 2026, public welfare communication in the internet era faces the dilemma of traffic supremacy: "tragic narratives, conflict plots, disadvantaged groups... these elements can always quickly trigger algorithmic recommendations and achieve explosive growth in traffic" [6]. This screening is highly concealed; it completes content screening in the form of non-recommendation. Aid seekers are not explicitly rejected, yet they cannot break through the platform's implicit control over traffic. By constructing standards of suffering narratives generally recognized by the public, algorithms allocate public attention and social public resources. Only narratives and emotions recognized by algorithms are more likely to be known and helped by the public.

This mechanism can be understood by borrowing the concept of signaling effect in economics. The signaling effect refers to the public changing expectations and economic behaviors according to policy signals; for example, the public adjusts expectations of macro fundamentals based on monetary policy information [7]. In platform philanthropy, the transmission of signals such as official platform certification and scarce resource allocation will incentivize potential donors to increase donation amounts, thereby affecting the algorithmic allocation of platform traffic [8].

2.3. Automated traceability mechanism

The development of technologies such as smart contracts and blockchain evidence storage has turned charitable funds into traceable data chains, and the regulatory model has shifted from traditional ex-post review to embedded real-time control. It no longer only focuses on results, but involves all links of charitable activities, gradually realizing process digitalization. This embodies the core feature of technocratic governance. In the operation of technics, various methods, mechanisms and organizational forms operate automatically according to their own logic. While people lose their right to choose, they often also lose their

reflection on the autonomy of technology. Technics thus gradually evolve into closed systems, endowed with near-sacred autonomy [9].

The deep paradox of automated traceability is that it can only display data that can be captured and calculated, while those existences that cannot be quantitatively verified are classified as untrustworthy. Therefore, the transparency claimed by the system is only transparency processed by algorithms. The foundation for the smooth operation of internet philanthropy is identifying and meeting the needs of recipients. Whether big data can improve the identification of aid requests from recipients is an urgent issue to be addressed [10]. When the system automatically freezes an abnormal expenditure, no one questions whether the expenditure is a result of fraud or an adaptive disposal in an emergency. According to a 2026 report by Jimu News, a girl who vomited blood in the subway received a large number of transfers after media coverage, and her account was frozen by the bank due to frequent transactions, resulting in the inability to use charitable funds in a timely manner [11]. The maturity of automated traceability technology has reduced room for human operation and weakened the moral attribute of philanthropy, gradually transforming philanthropy from a social practice with uncertainty into a technical process controlled by algorithms.

Thus, the three mechanisms of algorithmic regulation jointly accomplish a power of classification. It determines who are trustworthy donors or recipients, which suffering narratives qualify for public visibility, and what kind of charitable behaviors conform to the definition of compliance. This classificatory power, as a more concealed "selective occlusion", hides behind the rhetoric of technological neutrality and justifies itself in the name of efficiency, transparency and fraud prevention. What is forgotten is not only those individuals judged by algorithms as low-scoring, low-traffic, and unable to be evidenced on-chain, but also the inherent moral ambiguity and situational dependence of benevolence itself. While regulating benevolence, algorithms are also implicitly redefining "goodness": only calculable goodness can be effectively regulated by the system. This provides a necessary entry point for the analysis in the next section: when goodness must first be calculable goodness, is there a distance between the goodness guarded by technical regulation and the goodness that cannot be fully calculated in moral practice?

3. Four effects of algorithmic regulation: motivation narrowing, sympathy screening, responsibility shifting and compliance performance

The operation of technocracy in the philanthropy field embodies a paradox: the more it attempts to uphold benevolence through technical means, the more it transforms benevolence itself into an object that the system can recognize and process. The following four interrelated dimensions are analyzed along the transmission chain of individual consciousness, relational structure, and organizational behavior. The three mechanisms of algorithmic regulation first act on the individual level of donors and recipients, manifested as motivation narrowing and sympathy screening; then reconstruct the moral commitment relationship between the two, manifested as the dispersion and shifting of responsibility; and finally transmit to the organizational level to form goal displacement, manifested as the rise of compliance performance.

3.1. Motivation narrowing

Motivation narrowing is the first link in this transmission chain. In the gamified design of platform philanthropy, donation behaviors are transformed into a kind of accumulative, displayable and comparable digital performance, such as the hierarchy system of Alipay Public Welfare Medals, the ranking list of WeChat Sports Step Donation, and the point rules of Shuidichou Love Value. These mechanisms incorporate the expression of benevolence into a competitive framework. Donors' motivations gradually shift from "I want to

help this person" to "I want to maintain my level and ranking". This change in motivation is not a moral decline of individual users, but a structural product of institutional design. For activities originally driven mainly by actors' own interests, the introduction of external evaluation standards instead weakens their sense of intrinsic value; external regulations not only fail to strengthen the moral attribute of original behaviors, but may even produce counterproductive effects. The gamification mechanisms in platform philanthropy are precisely accomplishing this kind of social construction: they transform goodness from a moral dimension that is not easily quantified into a competitive activity that can be positioned, compared and optimized. When donation amount and frequency become public credit indicators, giving is no longer benevolence and exchange flowing in social relations, but becomes a strategy for accumulating personal digital capital; helping is no longer an intersubjective moral encounter, but a pursuit of system feedback.

3.2. Sympathy screening

Sympathy screening constitutes the second link, which points to the structure of public morality itself. Platform recommendation systems allocate traffic based on indicators such as the emotional intensity of aid information, social communication potential, and past conversion rates, which objectively creates a hierarchy of suffering. Narratives that most trigger immediate emotional responses gain visibility disproportionate to their content, while complex social needs that are difficult to compress into emotional outbursts are systematically obscured. This screening is a by-product of recommendation algorithms improving user engagement, not a bias of designers. Yet it deeply touches the core issue of the sociology of suffering: the visibility of suffering is never natural, but produced by specific media institutions and narrative frameworks. In platform philanthropy, algorithmic recommendation is precisely the contemporary form of this presentation technology. It determines in advance which sufferings can enter the horizon of public morality and which sufferings fade away because they do not conform to the emotional rules of algorithms, based on users' emotional response patterns. What results from this is not only unequal resource allocation, but also moral exclusion: cases with low conversion rates are deprived of the social qualification to trigger collective action in the systematic logic of algorithms. The moral urgency of suffering is no longer defined by the real needs of the sufferers, but by the algorithm's estimation of their communication potential.

3.3. Responsibility shifting

Responsibility shifting is the third link, touching the core element of philanthropy as a moral practice. When the circulation of charitable funds is fully entrusted to smart contracts and blockchain evidence storage, the social bond between donors and recipients, originally woven by trust, commitment and mutual accountability, is replaced by a one-way trust in the technical system. Luhmann distinguished between personal trust and system trust: the former is built on the familiar everyday world, while the latter supports highly functionally differentiated social systems [12]. In the operation of platform philanthropy, system trust has largely replaced interpersonal trust, resulting in a paradoxical consequence: when the moral responsibility that should be borne by people is shifted to the technical system, responsibility loses its social nature. The immutability of data in technical rules makes the technical system bear inescapable responsibility while blurring the social attribute of responsibility attribution. Once there are loopholes in code or algorithms, the three parties—donors, platforms and recipients—often shift blame to each other, and each party can claim that they have complied with the rules reasonably and legally and need not bear moral and legal consequences. For example, after Ms. Lan from Shanxi turned off the payment function, a total of 1.847 million yuan was still automatically transferred from her account in 6 installments, all flowing to 3 public foundations in the name of love donations [13]. This incident exposes the ambiguous zones in the division of powers and responsibilities among the parties

involved, the payment platform, and the foundations. If donors only verify the data presented by algorithms and technology without considering the real situation of recipients, goodness will alienate from an intersubjective moral practice into a technical confirmation of system reliability.

3.4. Compliance performance

At the organizational level, compliance performance is at the end of the entire transmission chain. While technology-enabled regulation improves efficiency, it also creates structural problems. When an organization's ability to continue gaining traffic and trust depends on the algorithm's judgment of platform regulatory indicators, technology and data, originally means, become the ends of organizational actions instead. Merton revealed this mechanism of goal displacement in his classic analysis of bureaucratic structure: discipline is interpreted as following rules, and it is no longer a measure for achieving specific goals, but evolves into a direct value in bureaucratic organizations [14]. Appropriate compliance awareness can effectively resist risks, but compliance performance often puts the cart before the horse.

This kind of goal displacement can already be traced in the first transformation of Chinese philanthropy. The first transformation of Chinese philanthropy roughly spanned from the 1980s to the promulgation and implementation of the *Charity Law of the People's Republic of China* in 2016. The regulatory logic of this stage was characterized by "emphasizing access over process, and form over effectiveness" [15]. In the current context of platform philanthropy, this feature is specifically manifested as: charitable organizations no longer prioritize the needs of recipients, but care about what behaviors can be effectively recorded and verified by algorithms. Power once pointed out that auditing actively creates the verification conditions it needs. Hence, in the face of concerns with the weakness or failure of audit, it sees on-going demands for more resources and formalised procedures that progressively expand the boundaries of the audit field and attach to audit new values and meanings. In this way [16]. Contemporary audit mechanisms pursue building trust through visibility, but as a result create an "audit-friendly" reality designed to be seen. This paradox is manifested in the algorithmic regulation of platform philanthropy: the more precisely algorithms measure charitable behaviors, the more the measured tend to produce behaviors that can be measured, thereby obscuring the incalculable moral effects of trust and sympathy in philanthropy.

The four dimensions above all point to the same theoretical proposition: the comprehensive expansion of algorithmic regulation in digital platform philanthropy is a contemporary form of the penetration of technical rationality into the lifeworld. This kind of penetration presents concealed characteristics: the penetrating subject is a technical system with both commercial logic and governance functions. It uses the discourses of empowerment, transparency and efficiency to incorporate life practices such as sympathy, trust and mutual aid, originally regulated by mutual understanding and moral deliberation, into a calculable and predictable system framework. When goodness must first undergo algorithmic classification, scoring and sorting before it can be recognized and circulated by the system, the philanthropy sector faces a structural transformation: it is no longer merely a moral community in the sense of the lifeworld, but also becomes a field of practice participated in and constrained by technical systems. This transformation has not only brought about improvements in efficiency and transparency, but also posed new institutional challenges to the moral texture of philanthropy.

4. The governance structure of digital platform philanthropy: platform dual roles, algorithmic transparency and chinese experience

Shifting the perspective to the governance structure, a key question emerges: digital platforms have long been embedded in philanthropy governance. With the penetration of technology, how should the boundary between algorithms and morality be established? In the traditional philanthropy governance pattern, the state, organizations and the public perform their respective duties with clear boundaries of powers and responsibilities. With the deep involvement of digital platforms, the originally stable pattern has undergone structural changes: platforms are not only transmitters of information, but also executors of regulation and collaborative governors. This means that a new form of philanthropy governance is taking shape, with the dual role of platforms as its core feature.

4.1. The dual role of platforms: executors and collaborative governors

The dual role of platforms is a key analytical perspective for understanding this form of governance. With the development of platforms, administrative regulatory functions originally belonging to civil affairs departments, such as qualification review of charitable organizations and verification of fundraising information, have gradually been transferred to public welfare platforms [17]. On the one hand, platforms become the technical extension of administrative regulation by virtue of technology; on the other hand, they also undertake the function of refining rules in operation, such as designing specific parameters of credit scoring models within the framework of laws and regulations, setting technical standards for traffic allocation, and defining identification rules for abnormal behaviors. This role of internet platforms as both executors and collaborative governors is an inevitable product of the development of specialized division of labor in philanthropy governance in the digital age. The *Measures for the Administration of Internet Public Fundraising Service Platforms* (issued in 2026, effective as of May 1, 2026) has initially made institutional arrangements, requiring platforms to be accountable to regulatory authorities in terms of information release review, homepage display rules, regular work reports, etc., and disclose service conditions to the public every six months [18]. *Article 4*, "having the ability to verify the authenticity of fundraising and other information released through it", and *Article 27*, "the format of the annual work report shall be uniformly formulated by the civil affairs department of the State Council", provide a normative basis for algorithmic accountability and also point out the direction of institutional development. These provisions together constitute a governance structure of administrative leadership, platform collaboration and social participation, in which platforms can exercise limited technical discretion in accordance with law.

4.2. Three-tier architecture of algorithmic transparency and accountability mechanisms

Improving the transparency and accountability of algorithms helps improve public satisfaction and organizational credibility. Establishing an algorithmic impact statement system, requiring public welfare and charitable organizations to disclose design purposes, data processing methods and possible social impacts before using algorithms, is a feasible approach [19]. In recent years, explorations around algorithm-related issues have made progress at all levels.

At the level of industry self-discipline, the China Charity Federation promotes the establishment of industry-wide standards such as cross-platform collaborative ethical norms, credibility standards, and platform responsibilities, forming a unified governance system. At the administrative level, the *Measures for the Administration of Social Organization Evaluation* revised by the Ministry of Civil Affairs in 2026 conducts evaluations based on multiple dimensions such as Party building, basic conditions, internal governance, work

performance, and social evaluation, among which sub-indicators of the internal governance dimension have been incorporated into the evaluation system [20]. Embedding algorithmic systems into the existing evaluation framework is an important direction for improving the system in the next step. At the rule of law level, the infringement of legal interests caused by algorithms in fields such as personal information has become increasingly prominent, and strengthening legislation in the field of algorithms has become an important direction of China's rule of law practice in recent years [21]. The *Personal Information Protection Law of the People's Republic of China* and the *Data Security Law of the People's Republic of China* provide legal guarantees for personal privacy and data security issues on charitable platforms [22, 23]. The current institutional design still has room for improvement. For example, issues such as how to formulate specific standards for algorithm filing and how to operate appeal mechanisms efficiently need further exploration.

4.3. Tripartite interaction of administrative leadership, platform collaboration and social participation

The essence of algorithms in modern society is a kind of human-computer interactive decision-making. It is necessary to reveal the technical essence that algorithms are not value-neutral, and then regulate algorithms [24]. China's digital philanthropy governance has unique advantages, including the deep integration of administrative leadership and technology empowerment. In the context of digital public welfare, a new multilateral regulatory relationship for public welfare platforms has been formed: as the regulatory subject, the state not only needs to supervise charitable organizations on platforms, but also supervise the public welfare platforms themselves [25]. For example, *Article 11 of the Measures for the Administration of Public Fundraising Platform Services* clearly stipulates that civil affairs departments shall, in accordance with law, supervise and administer the acts of registered charitable organizations releasing public fundraising information and carrying out public fundraising through platforms provided by radio, television, newspapers and periodicals, internet service providers, and telecom operators [26]. These provisions provide an institutional basis for administrative leadership: civil affairs departments can exercise regulatory power in accordance with law, and platforms can also enable regulation through technology. The *Provisions on Annual Expenditures, Administrative Expenses and Fundraising Costs of Charitable Organizations in Carrying Out Charitable Activities*, implemented in 2026, defines the scope of fundraising costs for the first time, requires charitable organizations to list fundraising costs according to actual facts, and sets a rigid upper limit that annual fundraising costs shall not exceed 3% of the average donation income of the previous three years [27]. This means that platform algorithms cannot unrestrainedly increase fundraising costs to expand fundraising scale. These Provisions, together with the *Measures for the Administration of Internet Public Fundraising Service Platforms* and the *Measures for the Administration of Public Fundraising Platform Services*, jointly constitute the institutional framework for digital philanthropy regulation.

Under this governance model, the multi-subject collaborative pattern of China's internet public welfare has initially taken shape, with close interactions between the Party and the government, charitable organizations, internet public fundraising information platforms, caring enterprises, caring people, volunteers, etc [28]. At the same time, this pattern also has shortcomings. For example, issues such as how to avoid technological gaps and algorithmic barriers still need to be continuously explored in the process of institutional construction.

4.4. Necessity and direction of institutional innovation

Misconduct in public welfare and philanthropy under digital technology conditions cannot rely entirely on traditional regulatory means, but requires innovative regulatory measures based on a full understanding of its occurrence mechanism [29]. Institutional governance can continuously innovate and optimize precisely

because there are tensions between technical efficiency and value justice, and between platform autonomy and administrative supervision. A series of explorations from algorithm filing to ethical initiatives, and from data interface standardization to appeal mechanism construction, indicate that China has made remarkable progress in improving the governance system. Chapter XI of the *Charity Law of the People's Republic of China* (amended in 2023) clearly stipulates the supervision and administration of charitable activities and charitable organizations. For example, *Article 103* stipulates that civil affairs departments of people's governments at or above the county level shall perform their duties in accordance with law, conduct supervision and inspection of charitable activities, and provide guidance to charitable industry organizations [30].

The core issue of digital philanthropy governance lies in how to make algorithms better accept social moral constraints through institutional construction. The degree of institutional improvement determines whether algorithms can play a positive role as infrastructure for philanthropy governance. The analysis of this paper also shows that the boundary of algorithm-enabled regulation cannot be delineated by any single party alone, but needs to be formed through multi-party interaction.

5. Three dimensions of collaborative governance: plural subjects, procedural justice and diverse forms of philanthropy

The above analysis reveals the multiple tensions triggered by algorithmic regulation in the philanthropy field, but revealing the problem itself is not the end point. A more constructive idea is that the true opposite of technocracy is not rejection of technology, but institutional design that re-embeds technology into social relations. In recent years, China's institutional exploration in the digital governance of philanthropy has provided a preliminary empirical basis for this symbiotic governance.

5.1. From algorithm-centric to plural collaboration

A deep presupposition of technocracy is that regulation is understood as cognitive labor that must be completed by a centralized technical system, while society is tacitly regarded as a passive recipient in need of protection. In fact, effective governance does not have to rely on a single centralized authority. When local actors have institutional space to independently formulate rules and negotiate conflicts, the governance mechanisms they develop are often more resilient and adaptive than externally imposed technical solutions. This insight enlightens digital philanthropy in that regulatory power does not have to be fully ceded to algorithms; society itself still retains the ability to construct order through dialogue and consultation.

An open and independent philanthropic culture and an inclusive philanthropic environment are important foundations for the healthy development of modern philanthropy [31]. In the native context of Chinese philanthropy, the embryonic form of such plural collaborative governance already exists. Mechanisms such as moral evaluation by industry associations, public questioning of charitable events by the media, and word-of-mouth confirmation of the authenticity of aid seekers within communities have long jointly constituted the social infrastructure of China's philanthropy field. They may not be as efficient as algorithms, but they have functions that algorithms cannot replace, such as face-to-face trust building and situational moral judgment. Civil affairs departments have realized the collaborative linkage of administrative regulation and technical implementation through data docking between the "Charity China" platform and leading fundraising platforms. In this collaborative pattern, algorithms are repositioned as tools to assist social governance, rather than alternative solutions. The key is not whether algorithms participate, but whether algorithms are placed under social scrutiny and institutional constraints.

5.2. From algorithmic black box to explainability: the institutional path of procedural justice

If plural collaboration responds to the issue of regulatory subjects, then another key inquiry is procedural justice: after algorithms make decisions, do affected parties have institutional channels to understand and challenge the decisions? In early platform philanthropy practices, algorithmic outputs often directly acted on donation and aid processes, with operational data and analytical logic not open to the public. What users ultimately saw was just a cold number [32]. This closed nature of decision-making constitutes the core challenge of technocracy at the procedural level. Any algorithmic decision-making system that claims to be legitimate must embed mechanisms for questioning, refuting and revising from the beginning of design, so that affected parties can not only obtain results, but also understand the generation logic of the results, and raise effective objections on this basis. Relevant research by scholars such as Lyons is representative; Submissions describe a number of steps that need to be taken in order to contest a decision [33].

China is continuously advancing institutional exploration in technological transparency and accountability. This paper argues that algorithmic regulation can only serve as a technical supplement to carry out normative operations within an established framework, and cannot replace traditional regulatory subjects such as governments or experts. In response to the technical logic of algorithms, the technical path of algorithm governance aims to implement algorithmic ethical principles by optimizing algorithm design [34]. These institutions clarify that algorithms are governance tools that can be questioned and supervised, rather than technical authorities. The *Initiative on Self-Discipline and Digital Empowerment of Internet Public Fundraising Service Platforms* also proposes to enhance the innovative application of cutting-edge technologies in fields such as information disclosure, donation feedback, and risk prevention and control, strictly follow guidelines, and avoid algorithm abuse and risks [35]. Optimizing institutional design should clearly define algorithmic processes and boundaries, not only enhance social participation in regulation, but also improve the transparency of all links.

5.3. Constructing institutional space for diverse forms of philanthropy

Plural collaboration and procedural justice respond to the issues of regulatory subjects and decision-making processes respectively, but both presuppose that continuously improving governance design can be closer to the justice of philanthropy. This leads to a more fundamental theoretical reflection: in philanthropic practice, is there a structural tension between the helping logic based on trust and the algorithmic logic based on efficiency? From the perspective of technocracy, many philanthropic practices based on geographical, kinship and daily interactions may seem inefficient and opaque, but it is they that constitute the moral foundation of philanthropy. When a community spontaneously raises funds for a sick neighbor, it relies on trust accumulated in daily interactions, not algorithmic calculation and screening.

This understanding is not a rejection of digital technology, but a theoretical recognition of the diverse forms of philanthropic practice. Zelizer pointed out that the public can appropriately match relational bonds, economic transactions and transaction media through the process of relational work, and endow them with unique meanings [36]. This finding has direct transformative value for the thesis of this paper: algorithms do not necessarily corrode benevolence; the key lies in whether an institutional space can be reserved for benevolence that is not fully encoded by algorithms, and whether social actors can continuously and creatively negotiate the boundary between algorithms and morality. In June 2019, China released the *Governance Principles for the New Generation of Artificial Intelligence in China—Developing Responsible Artificial Intelligence*, which put forward eight principles: harmony and friendliness, fairness and justice, inclusiveness and sharing, privacy respect, security and controllability, shared responsibility, open collaboration, and agile governance, which have guiding significance for the development of the artificial intelligence industry [37].

Institutional exploration in China's philanthropy field is also advancing along this direction. If polycentric governance and procedural justice provide space and channels for negotiation, then the institutional recognition of diverse forms of philanthropic practice provides the cultural soil for such negotiation to unfold, and establishes an ethical attitude that no longer regards efficiency as the only value.

Looking back at the analytical context of the full paper from this theoretical perspective, the expansion of algorithmic regulation in digital platform philanthropy poses a deep challenge to China's digital philanthropy governance: the problem does not lie in technology itself, but in how to ensure that technology serves the social goals of philanthropy through institutional construction. At present, there is an urgent need to promote the transformation from scientific philanthropy to digital-intelligent philanthropy. While promoting the development of philanthropy with digital technology, it should always put "people" at the core of philanthropy [38]. After all, the essence of philanthropy is the response to the suffering of others. As long as the right to respond still belongs to people and society, rather than being fully ceded to algorithms, philanthropy retains its dignity as a practice of the lifeworld.

6. Conclusion and outlook

To sum up, the core findings of this paper can be summarized as follows: after being embedded in digital platform philanthropy as a technical tool, algorithms, while improving regulatory transparency and reducing information costs, also transform "goodness" into an object that can be calculated, sorted and optimized, leading to the marginalization of some moral experiences that are difficult to quantify. This paradox stems from the structural tension in the regulation of the digital philanthropy field. The theoretical contribution of this paper lies in proposing and demonstrating the analytical concept of "technocratic turn", systematically expounding the transformation process of regulatory objects and regulatory standards, constructing an analytical framework of three operational mechanisms and four effects, and revealing how algorithmic regulation completes pre-emptive value screening in the guise of technological neutrality.

At the theoretical level, this paper expands the understanding of the penetration of technical rationality into the lifeworld from two aspects: on the one hand, the subject of penetration expands from administrative systems to digital platforms with both commercial logic and governance functions; on the other hand, the mechanism of penetration transforms from direct intervention of money and power to indirect regulation of algorithmic classification and traffic allocation. At the practical level, through long-term exploration, China has constructed a governance pattern of "state-platform-society" collaboration: the state enacts policies and regulations to provide a basis for algorithmic regulation, industry organizations play a leading role, and social members extensively participate in supervision. The sound interaction among the three parties provides a Chinese solution for resolving the inherent tensions of technocracy. Meanwhile, it should be pointed out that algorithm-enabled philanthropy regulation must grasp a reasonable boundary, and excessive regulation will inhibit industry vitality. In the future, it should rely on relevant supporting regulations and infrastructure, clarify regulatory boundaries on the basis of legality and compliance, and uphold the value orientation of philanthropy governance.

It should be noted that the research in this paper mainly relies on public policy texts, media reports and platform rule descriptions, and has not obtained internal operational data of charitable platforms. Therefore, the analysis of algorithmic operation mechanisms, internal parameter settings and their deep logic still needs to be deepened. As digital philanthropy platforms generally maintain a confidential attitude towards algorithm architectures, the academic community has long been able to conduct research only relying on external observation and empirical judgment, and its accuracy and depth are inevitably limited. If researchers can reach

research cooperation with technology platforms, they will be expected to more directly answer the question of how algorithms regulate benevolence. At the same time, such research also faces dual pressures of ethical review and research independence. Researchers must enhance their awareness of scientificity and standardization in the design stage.

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