

Is /ought problem from viewpoint of Allameh Mesbah Yazdi

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Abstract

One of the most challenging problems in the epistemology of Ethics is "Is/Ought problem". This problem comes from a paragraph of David Hume in his book, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, where he wrote: "In every system of morality, which I have hitherto met with, I have always remarked, that the author proceeds for some time in the ordinary way of reasoning, and establishes the being of a God, or makes observations concerning human affairs; when of a sudden I am surprised to find, that instead of the usual of propositions, *is*, and *is not*, I meet with no proposition that is not connected with an *ought*, or an *ought not*. This change is imperceptible; but is, however, of the last consequence. For as this *ought*, or *ought not*, expresses some new relation or affirmation. It is necessary that it should be observed and explained; and at the same time that a reason should be given, for what seems altogether inconceivable, how this new relation can be a deduction from others, which are entirely different from it. But as authors do not commonly use this precaution, I shall presume to recommend it to the readers; and am persuaded, that this small attention would subvert all the vulgar systems of morality" (Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, pp.215, New Zealand, The Floating Press, 2009). Hence, this problem has been named "Hume's law" and "Hume's guillotine". Also, it known as: Is/ought distinction, is/ought split, is /ought fallacy, is /ought gap, is /ought dichotomy, is/ought controversy, is/ought thesis, is/ought relation, is/ought separation, is/ought Divide, is/ought alienation, is/ought impasse, is/ought gulf, is /ought fallacy, naturalistic fallacy, fact/value problem, and so on. This paragraph has been interpreted in different ways: Sometimes, it was interpreted to mean that "ethics" comes from "emotion", not from "reason"; and sometimes, it was interpreted to mean that we cannot deduce "Ought" from "Is". It is noticeable that the second is current interpretation and it has been the main position for challenge in epistemology of ethics and law. So, there are two opposite theories suggested here for solving this problem. Some philosophers believe that we cannot deduce "ought" from "is". While, others do not think so, such as John Searle

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in his book: *Speech acts: An essay in the philosophy of language*. It is worth mentioning that Professor Allameh Mesbah Yazdi believes in "Derivational Theory", that is, we can drive "Ought" from "Is", because "ought" sometimes shows "Objective Necessity" which can be understood by "Comparative Necessity". This is a special theory for solving "Is-ought problem" which has been suggested by Professor Allameh Mesbah Yazdi. This theory is going to be explained in this essay (article) by using comparative and analytic method. At first, the problem will be explained, then different theories (positive and negative) will be introduced. Afterwards, some ways for solving problem such as: I. Solving Problem from Omitting Problem; II. Solving Problem from Counter-Example; III. Solving Problem from Monism Theory; IV. Solving Problem from Deontic Model Logic; V. "Solving Problem from Comparative Necessity" will be discussed and finally the last way for solving the problem, that is the perspective of Professor Mesbah for solving problem will be defended. This article explains that this problem was originated from a fallacy that "Ought" is always the sign of being prescriptive sentence which is naturally contradictory to the declarative one, while it is not always the sign of prescriptive one, because we can use "Ought" to refer to the fact and describe and the real necessity by "Comparative necessity". Professor Mesbah believes that if there is complete cause, the existence of effect is comparatively necessary, because this kind of necessity can be understood by comparison. So, if there is a sentence about this kind of necessity, it should be declarative one. According to Islamic philosophical terms, there are three kinds of necessity: Necessity by itself, necessity by something-else, and necessity in relation to something-else (Necessity by comparison = comparative necessity). According to the theory of professor Mesbah, real values, such as moral values and law values, come from facts by the means of comparative necessity between value facts and their final purposes. Using the word "real" here signs that some of values come from real facts which are connected to Allah as the base for all real values.

Key words: Is-ought problem, Ethics, Is/ought gap, Hume, Searle, Allameh Mesbah Yazdi.