



## Is/Ought Problem according to Allameh Mesbah Yazdi<sup>1</sup>

Abbas Arefi

Faculty member of philosophy department from Imam Khomeini Education & Research  
Institute. abbas.arefi@gmail.com

### Abstract

One of the most perplexing problems in the epistemology of Ethics is the "Is/ought problem." This conundrum stems from a passage in David Hume's *A Treatise of Human Nature*, where he observes, "In every system of morality ... 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... This small attention would subvert all the vulgar systems of morality... ." (Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, p.215) As a result, this problem has come to be called "Hume's Law" or "Hume's Guillotine." It has also been referred to by many other names, such as the 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 more. It is important to note that Hume's paragraph has been interpreted in different ways. Some have taken it to imply that "Ethics" arises from "Emotion" rather than "Reason," while others believe that "Ought" cannot be deduced from "Is." The second interpretation is the prevailing one and has proven to be a significant challenge in the epistemology of ethics and law. Indeed, many philosophers, such as Hume in the current interpretation, contend that we cannot deduce "Ought" from "Is." John Searle and others hold a different view on the Is/Ought problem compared to Professor Allameh Mesbah Yazdi. It is worth noting that Professor Yazdi put forward the "Derivational Theory," which argues that we can derive "Ought"

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from "Is." According to this theory, "Ought" sometimes represents "Objective Necessity," which can be grasped through "Comparative Necessity." This provides a powerful solution to the Is/Ought problem. The present study aimed to explore this theory using a comparative and analytic approach. We will argue that the Is/Ought problem stems from the mistaken belief that "Ought" always signifies a prescriptive (normative) sentence, which naturally contradicts a declarative one. However, this is not the case because "Ought" can refer to "Comparative Necessity" in reality. Professor Mesbah believed that when there is a complete cause, the existence of an effect is comparatively necessary. This type of necessity can be apprehended through comparison. Therefore, if a sentence describes this kind of necessity, it should be a declarative sentence. According to Islamic philosophical terminology, there are three types of necessity: Necessity by itself, necessity by something else, and necessity in relation to something else (comparative necessity). Professor Mesbah's theory states that real values are derived from facts and can be comprehended through comparative necessity between value acts and their ultimate purposes. The use of the word "Real" here implies that some values come from actual facts that are connected to Allah (God) as the foundation of all real values.

### **Keywords**

Is-ought problem, Ethics, Is/ought gap, Hume's guillotine, Is/ought fallacy, Allameh Mesbah Yazdi.

## Introduction

One of the most challenging problems in the epistemology of ethics is the "Is-Ought problem." It is generally believed that this problem originated from David Hume in his famous book, *A Treatise Concerning Human Nature*, book III, chapter I, published in 1739. As a result, this problem has been referred to as "Hume's law" and "Hume's guillotine." Additionally, it is known by various other names, such as the 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, naturalistic fallacy, fact/value problem, among others. The problem arises from the fact that there are two types of statements: descriptive and prescriptive. Descriptive statements describe what is true, while prescriptive statements make recommendations about what ought to be done or avoided. Therefore, prescriptive statements cannot be inferred from descriptive ones. The question then arises about the source of ethical standards. Is morality simply a matter of personal preference, or are there objective moral facts? This issue leads to puzzles about the nature of moral claims and their truth and justification. Is/Ought problem can be further divided into three sub-problems: semantic, logical, and epistemological. These sub-problems concern the meaning of moral claims, the logical relationship between descriptive and prescriptive statements, and how ethical knowledge can be obtained, respectively.

David Hume may have been considering these points when he stated that an "Ought" cannot be derived from an "Is." However, the exact meaning of his words in *A Treatise Concerning Human Nature*, book III, chapter I is subject to substantial challenge. Furthermore, there is debate over whether Hume was correct in his statement. There are at least two possible interpretations of Hume's "Is/Ought paragraph:" the common (traditional) interpretation and the uncommon interpretation. According to the common interpretation, Hume argued that no claims about matters of fact (i.e., "Is" claims) entail any evaluative claims (i.e., "Ought" claims). Hume believed that to infer the latter from the former, at least one evaluative premise must be added to the premises. For example, we can infer from the fact that someone is feeling pain that "Something is bad" only if we add the premise that pain is bad. This view is similar to the one proposed by Gorge Edward Moore, who argued against defining moral properties using natural ones,

known as the naturalistic fallacy. According to this fallacy, moral language cannot be defined by factual and natural properties. It should be noted, however, that the naturalistic fallacy is not the same as the "Is/Ought fallacy," which involves drawing evaluative conclusions from descriptive premises. The "Is/Ought problem" originates from the common interpretation of Hume's is/ought paragraph.

The problem can be summarized as the idea that we cannot derive deontological (what ought to be done) statements from ontological (what is) statements, as it leads to a fallacy. Committing a fallacy is logically prohibited. There are different opinions both for and against this problem that are discussed in this essay. However, this essay will focus on analyzing the viewpoint of Allameh Mesbah Yazdi, a prominent contemporary Islamic philosopher, who believes that the "Is/ought problem" can be solved through the semantics of moral statements by referring to a type of causal necessity known in Islamic philosophy as "Comparative necessity." This article will examine his perspective and compare it with other theories on this problem that have been presented.

## 1. Explanation of the Problem

The "Is/ought problem" is a challenging issue that originates from a paragraph in Hume's widely-known work *A Treatise Concerning Human Nature*, namely book III, chapter I in 1739. This problem contains various aspects, such as ontological, semantic, logical, and epistemological issues. The proposed "Hume's guillotine" argument suggests that we cannot epistemologically derive the statement "Human beings who live in a society should be just" from the fact that "Human beings who live in a society need justice." This is an epistemic problem based on a logical problem because it is impossible to conclude anything outside the premises of an argument. Thus, we cannot derive a "Should" statement from an "Is" statement. The underlying epistemic problem involves a logical issue that relates to the semantics of "Should" and similar concepts. Lastly, we face an ontological problem that relates to the ontology of "Ought" statements. It is worth noting that solving all aspects of the problem is necessary to solve this complex issue. To summarize, this is the problem at hand.

$P_1, P_2, P_3 \dots P_N$  (No-evaluative propositions)  $\vdash$  Q (An evaluative conclusion)

## 2. Four Suppositions on the Problem

The process of derivation leads to four suppositions, but some of them would be a problem:

**2-1. Derivation Is from Is:** One of the suppositions is derivation is-statement from ought- statement.

**2-2. Derivation Ought from Ought:** Another supposition is derivation ought- statement from ought-statement.

**2-3. Derivation Ought from Is:** This supposition involves deriving an ought-statement from an is-statement. In formal deductive logic, "Deriving" means creating a valid argument that goes from true premises to accurate conclusions. A classic example of a syllogism is "Socrates is a man; all men are mortal; therefore, Socrates is mortal." However, there is a question known as the is/ought problem, which suggests that it is impossible to derive, in terms of a formally valid logical argument, a proposal on how to act from a sequence of descriptions or events.

**2-4. Derivation Is from Ought:** The vice versa of the previous supposition is deriving an is-statement from an ought-statement. It is evident that the main challenges lie with the third and fourth suppositions. As a logical principle, it is fallacious to infer facts from values and, more specifically, to derive an "Is" statement from an "ought" statement.

For example, if we say that the world ought to be a certain way, it does not necessarily imply that it is currently that way or will inevitably become that way in the future. In order to bridge the gap between the desired state and the actual state, an additional premise must be added indicating that it ought to be so. Otherwise, there is no basis to assume that the universe aligns with our wishes, commands, or prohibitions (Pigden, ed., Russell on Ethics, p.17). Vice versa, the relationship between "What ought to be" and "What is," "What has been," or "What will be" holds importance (ibid: pp.37-39). Despite this, the foundational problem of ethics is the "Fact/Value problem." Philosophers have traditionally been concerned with the relationship between facts and values and have asked about the role of values in a fact-based world (ibid: pp.173-183).

## 3. Hume's Is/Ought Paragraph

This is a particularly challenging and well-known passage on the "Is/ought problem," authored by David Hume:

"In every system of morality that I have encountered, the author begins by employing typical modes of reasoning, such as establishing the existence of a god or making observations about human affairs. And then, suddenly and insidiously, I find that instead of encountering propositions linked through the copulation of 'is' and 'is not,' there are no propositions to be found that are not connected, willingly or unwillingly, to an 'ought' or an 'ought not'. This transformation is subtle but momentous. Since this 'ought' or 'ought not' implies some new affirmation or relationship, it becomes necessary that it be recognized and explicated, while simultaneously presenting reasons for what is altogether inconceivable, namely how this novel relation could be deduced from others that are completely distinct. However, authors rarely observe this necessary precaution, which I take the liberty of recommending to readers. By doing so, I am convinced that this modest act of mindfulness would undermine all common moral systems and demonstrate that the distinction between vice and virtue is not rooted solely in the relationships between objects, nor can it be comprehended by reason alone." (Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, pp.215).

#### **4. The Interpretations of Hume' Paragraph**

The famous paragraph of David Hume, concerning is/ought problem, has been interpreted by different interpretations, as you see in the followings:

**4-1. First interpretation:** Moral assessments are not rational judgments based on logical deduction, but emotional reactions. Therefore, they do not adhere to logical rules, nor are they subject to logical deductions. Hume's perspective is that "Ought" is linked with "Is" on the basis of psychological states like inclinations, habits, acceptance, or affirmation, rather than through logic. Consequently, neither "Is" implies "Ought" nor "Ought" implies "Is". Moreover, Hume held the belief that facts themselves are valueless, or value-neutral (Weissman, "The Cage: Must, Should, and ought from is", p.180). Hume rejected the notion that reason plays a role in morality, same as he refused the role of religion in this context, arguing that ethics is solely based on feelings. He emphasized the importance of "Primacy of feeling" in human life (Russell, Paul, "The Riddle of Hume's Treatise", pp.239-243). Hume rejected the concept of rational intuitionism and believed that morality is unprovable (Rawls, "Lectures", pp.78-83). On

the other hand, some philosophers, including Sedgwick, Moore, Rawls, and Ross, argue that our moral knowledge is ultimately founded upon self-evident moral truths and that moral facts are metaphysically separate from natural facts (Brink, "Moral Realism and the Foundations of Ethics", pp.107-113).

**4-2. Second interpretation:** 'Ought' cannot be derived from 'is'. The statements of obligations cannot be rationally derived from factual statements. This is a common interpretation of the Hume' Paragraph

**4-3. Third interpretation:** Statements of obligation logically come from emotional reactions, not from rational judgments. According to this interpretation, ought-statements can be derived only from emotional is-statements, not from rational ones. Therefore, the real confliction due to this interpretation would be basically between emotion and ration, not between is and ought statements.

As you see, the first interpretation differs from the second and the third ones in its lacking deduction; while, the second differs from the third in this matter that what is logically forbidden here would be all is/ought derivations, not only derivation ought- statements from the emotional is-statements. According to the common interpretation of the Hume's paragraph, Hume believed that we cannot move from a fact "X is Y" to an obligation.

## **5. The Problem and Two Main Approaches**

There are two main approaches about moral statements which have produced so many realistic and unrealistic theories on is /ought problem:

**5-1. The First Approach:** One of the main approaches on the moral statements is that "Ought" could be reduced only to psychological motivations (anti-realism). It means that one may accept that moral statements cannot be derived from factual ones, for there is no moral realism. Then, this problem has been called "Naturalistic fallacy" by the proponents of this approach.

**5-2. The Second Approach:** The second approach is that moral statements can be based on the fact. Most philosophers grant that there are moral facts for moral statements such as other facts for non-moral statements. So, moral statements can be realistic ones.

## 6. Different Challenges around the Problem

The "Is-ought problem" is a central problem in the philosophy and epistemology of ethics which has been position for different challenges:

**6-1. Interpretation Challenge:** One of the controversies on the problem is the interpretation of Hume' paragraph on this problem. You can see this kind of controversy in these essays: "Hume on is and ought", by A.C. Macintyre; "Hume on is and ought: A reply to Mr Macintyre" by Geoffrey Hunter; "On the interpretation of Hume" by Antony Flew; "A Reply to Professor Flew" by Geoffrey Flew, and so on. (Hudson, ed., the Is/Ought Question, PP.34-80).

**6-2. Challenge on reducing "Ought" to "Is":** There are some debates on the reduction 'ought' to 'is'. You can see this kind of controversy in these essays: The "Is-ought: An unnecessary dualism" by Zimmerman; "Zimmerman's is-is: A Schizophrenic Monism" by Kenneth Hanly; "A Note on the 'is-ought' barrier" by M. Zimmerman. (Ibid. pp.81-95)

**6-3. Challenge on the deriving ought from is:** There are various challenges that involve deriving "ought" from "is", and several attempts have been made at it in the following essays: "The Gap Between Is and Should" by Man Black, "The Possibilities of Moral Advice" by D.Z. Phillips, "How to Derive Ought from Is" by John Searle, "On Not Deriving Ought from Is" by Antony Flew, "The Promising Game" by R.M. Hare, "On Deriving Ought from Is" by J.E. McClellan and B.P. Komisar, "How Not to Derive Ought from Is" by James Thomson, and "The Is/Ought Controversy" by W.D. Hudson (Ibid, pp.96-172). Furthermore, there are numerous additional essays on this subject, including "Is and Ought: Where Does the Problem Lie?" by Pedro M.S. Alves, "Searlean Is and Ought Revisited" by Wojciech Zelaniec, "Some Remarks on Searle's View on the Logic of Practical Reasoning" by Marco Sant'Ambrogio, "On the Regulative Functions of Constitutive Rules" by Frederick Schafer, "Existence as a Source of Normativity: An Alternative to Searle's View" by Monticelli, "How to Derive Is from Ought" by Amedeo Giovanni Conte, "Searle vs. Conte on Constitutive Rules" by Corrado Roversi, "Ought is Spoken in Many Ways" by Paolo Di Lucia, and so forth (see: Di Lucia, ed., "Revisiting Searle on Deriving Ought from Is," pp.33-322).

## 7. Different Ways for Solving the Problem

There are many ways for solving the “is-ought” problem that we refer to some important ones.

**7-1. Solving Problem from Omitting Problem:** Some philosophers try to omit the "is /ought problem" from rejecting common interpretation of Hume' paragraph, such as Professor Macintyre.

**7-2. Solving Problem from Counter-Example:** some philosophers try to solve the problem by giving counter examples. An outstanding analytic philosopher that chose this kind of solution for this problem is Professor John Searle. He tried to solve is-ought problem by "Promise" as a counter-example.

**7-3. Solving Problem from Monism Theory:** some philosophers, such as M. Zimmermam, try to reduce 'ought' to 'is' by rejecting dualism regarding to is and ought.

**7-4. Solving Problem from Deontic Model Logic:** In recent decades, modal logic has emerged as an incredibly powerful tool for constructing logics of sentence operators of any kind. Given that "Ought" or obligation is a sentence operator (e.g., "OA" for "it is obligatory that A"), it is logical to base deontic logic – the logic of obligation – on modal logic. In fact, the most advanced form of deontic logic is a branch that was developed as an offshoot of modal logic. From a semantic standpoint, these logics are characterized by Kripke models that are built around sets of possible "worlds". Modal logic can take two forms – modal propositional logic, and modal predicate logic (Schurz, "The Is-Ought Problem," pp.7-67).

To solve "The Is-Ought Problem," several contemporary philosophers have turned to a branch of logic that has grown significantly in recent years, known as "Deontic Logic". Modal deontic logic is an offshoot of this, concerned with value necessity, among other things. The truth of p could either be necessary (Np), possible but not necessary (MP), or impossible (Ip). These modalities are inter-definable by virtue of the following equivalences:  $Np = Mp = Ip$  (Navarro, "Deontic Logic and Legal Systems," pp.3-38).

**7-5. Solving Problem from Comparative Necessity:** The method for solving the "Is/ought problem" discussed in this section is unique to Professor Allameh Mesbah Yazdi. According to Professor Mesbah, if there is a process of causality with complete causes and an effect, a

philosophical concept of necessity called "Comparative necessity" arises in Islamic philosophy. This necessity is derived from comparing causes to their effects and can be expressed using words such as "Ought" or "Should". The point to note here is that this necessity implies that if there are "Complete causes," then the "Effect" is necessary, and vice versa. Essentially, this type of necessity is equivalent to using words such as "Ought" or "Should" (to describe what is needed or required).

## **8. Professor Mesbah and the Problem**

According to Professor Mesbah, the existence of complete causes necessarily entails the existence of the effect. This concept of necessity has been termed "Comparative necessity" within Islamic philosophy. Professor Mesbah views this type of necessity as reflective of the reality and fact present in the premises. As such, the term "Ought" can be used to express this necessity. Professor Mesbah discusses this problem and how it should be solved in his book, *Philosophical Instructions*.

"In discussing ethical and legal topics, we find that they are expressed through concepts such as "Ought" or "Ought not," and "Required" or "Prohibited." These concepts can serve as the predicates of propositions. Additionally, concepts such as justice, injustice, trustworthiness, and treachery may serve as the subjects of propositions. However, we see that these concepts are not "Whatish" concepts as they do not have any entified instances. Thus, they are termed "I'tibārī." For example, the concepts of "Thief" or "Usurper" are attributes that may be applied to people, but they do not pertain to the quiddity of a person. Rather, they arise solely because the person has taken someone else's property. Similarly, the concept of "Property" is not applied to metals like gold and silver because they are of a specific kind. Rather, it is because they are desired by people and can be used to fulfill their needs. From another perspective, the acquisition of property is a sign of another concept called "Possession." However, possession, too, has no external instance. To credit someone with the title of "Possessor" or to credit gold with the title of "Possession" does not change the essence of the person or the gold.

In conclusion, expressions of this kind possess unique features that warrant discussion from several different perspectives. One of these perspectives is linguistic and literary, concerned with the original meaning of the term and how it has evolved to assume its present form. It is

important to consider whether the application of this meaning is literal or figurative. Additionally, the nature of prescriptive and descriptive terms should be explored, along with the purpose and whether ethical and legal terms refer to prescriptions or descriptions. These discussions fall under branches of linguistics and literature, and scholars of the science of the principles of Islamic jurisprudence (*uṣūl al-fiqh*) have conducted extensive research on these topics. Another aspect of discussions surrounding these concepts is their perception and the mechanism of transference of the mind from one to another, both of which require examination in the psychology of the mind. Finally, discussions regarding these concepts relate to their connections with objective realities. One must inquire whether these concepts have been invented by the mind without any connection to external realities. Are 'ought' and 'ought not,' along with other value concepts, entirely independent of other types of concepts generated through a special mental power? Or are they merely descriptive of individual or social desires and inclinations? Are ethical and legal propositions descriptive? Can they be correct or in error? It is important to explore whether these concepts are related to objective realities or abstracted from them?

Do these concepts have prescriptive qualities that render correctness and incorrectness meaningless? If we were to imagine truth values for these concepts, what criteria would be used to determine their truth or falsehood? By what standards can truth and error be recognized? This aspect of the discussion falls under epistemology and requires explanation. In this regard, we will briefly explain the simple concepts of ethics and law, and in the final section of the epistemological discussion, we will address the evaluation of value propositions while highlighting the differences between ethical and legal propositions. (Mesbah, *Philosophical Instructions*, Lesson fifteen & Lesson twenty). When we consider an action in relation to its desired goal, we can abstract the concept of value from it in terms of its desirability. When we consider the ontological relation of the action in terms of its consequences, we obtain the concepts of obligation and permissibility. In philosophical terms, such obligation is interpreted as relative necessity (*ḍarurat bil-qiyās*). Thus, with respect to this introduction, it is reasonable to conclude that the criterion for truth and falsity, correctness and error, in ethical and legal propositions, is their efficacy in achieving desired goals.

The effect is not subordinate to one's inclinations, desires, tastes, or opinions. Like other causal relations, it arises from the reality of the situation itself. Of course, mistakes can be made in recognizing the ultimate goal and intermediate goals, such as when someone limits a person's goal to worldly luxuries based on a materialistic outlook. Likewise, mistakes can be made in recognizing how a person achieves true goals. However, none of these errors compromise the causal relation between voluntary actions and their consequences, nor do they exclude them from the realm of intellectual discussions and rational arguments. Philosophers' mistakes do not imply a denial of intellectual realities independent from opinion and thought. Controversies among scientists regarding the rules of experimental knowledge do not negate the existence of such knowledge either. In conclusion, the principles of ethics and law are philosophical propositions that can be proven by intellectual arguments. The intellect of the common person may be deficient in deducing judgments for particular propositions from universal principles due to the complexity of formulas, the abundance of factors and variables, and lack of proficiency. In such cases, reliance on revelation is necessary. Therefore, ethical and legal propositions cannot be said to depend on the inclinations, desires, tastes, or opinions of individuals or groups. Conversely, it cannot be argued that ethical and legal propositions depend on the needs and changing conditions of the time and place, and that rational proofs do not apply to them, but only to universal, eternal, and necessary propositions.

It is also wrong to claim that these propositions pertain to an intellect other than the theoretical intellect, and that therefore reasoning about them with philosophical premises related to the theoretical intellect is incorrect." (Mesbah, Philosophical Instructions, Lesson twenty)

Professor Mesbah contends that if there is a complete cause, the effect's existence is comparatively necessary since this type of necessity is understood via comparison. Thus, it is referred to as "Comparative necessity" in Islamic philosophy. We can use the word "Ought" to indicate this type of necessity since it truly exists in the premises and emerges in conclusion via the word "Ought." For instance, water is formed from Oxygen and Hydrogen. Therefore, to have water, the combination of the previous gases is necessary, and we can use the word "Ought" to show this sort of necessity since H<sub>2</sub>O signifies water (Mesbah, Porseshva va

Pasokhha, Vol.4, p.221 & Vol.5, pp.285-287). There are three types of necessity in Islamic philosophical terms: Necessity by itself, necessity by something-else, and necessity in relation to something-else (necessity by comparison = comparative necessity). Real values, such as moral and legal values, according to Professor Mesbah, come from facts through the use of comparative necessity between value facts and their ultimate objectives. The usage of the word "Real" here indicates that some values arise from genuine facts that are connected to Allah as the base for all authentic values. (Mesbah, *Chakidai az Andishahe Bonyadin Islami*, pp.98-109). Naturally, moral values differ from legal values in specific regards:

Moral value lacks an external practical guarantee, whereas law value possesses external guarantees. Law value pertains to social order, while moral value may not be related to social order (ibid: pp.101-102). Although it is possible for moral value to be equivalent to law value, and vice versa (Mesbah, *Droose Falsafa*, pp.66-70), but it cannot be denied that moral and legal judgments sometimes appear in the forms of "Ought," "Not ought," etc. However, it should be recognized that these distinct forms have two layers: the linguistic layer and the meta-linguistic layer. Naturally, the first relies on the second since linguistic presentations logically derive from genuine relations (*Hoqooq va Siasat dar Quran*, pp.166-167). Professor Mesbah has mentioned that we have two types of "Ought" and "Not ought": Worthy ought /Worthy not-ought and Worthless ought /Worthless not-ought. Thus, all terms used for natural aims and natural acts are Worthless terms, but all terms used for final goals and optional acts are worthy ones. For example, if one says that to become healthy, we should utilize a specific drug or that making up chlorine and sodium creates salt, they have used Worthless terms that explain the relationship between natural acts and their objectives through the mechanism of comparative necessity; however, if one says that to become happy, we should offer prayers, the word "should" is a worthy term. In general, all religious, existential, and valuable terms are worthy terms that are Meta-natural expressions (Mesbah, *Dar Barayeh Pejush*, pp.136-137).

Allameh Mesbah attempts to illustrate that although error is possible in knowing the final purposes for human acts, this cannot harm law and moral realism (Mesbah, *Sairy dar Sahel*, pp.183-184). It should be noted that the term "comparative necessity" has been known by Muslim philosophers like Mullasadra (Asfar, Vol. 1, pp.155-171). Still, Professor Mesbah Yazdi has

used this term to solve the "Is-ought problem" in the epistemology of ethics. We should know that "Comparative necessity" can be attributed to cause and effect, while "By other necessity" can only be attributed to the effect (Mesbah, *Sharhe Elahyyate Shefa*, vol. 1, pp.321-332; Shirazi (Mollasadra), *Taliqah bar Elahyyate Shefa*, p.31).

Therefore, if there is a complete cause, the being of the effect is necessary by comparative necessity. Still, if there is no complete cause, the being of effect is not necessary. In fact, "Effect" and complete cause are necessary by comparison (Mesbah, *Nazariah Hoqooki Islam*, vol. 1, pp.287-290). Therefore, we can conclude that deriving "Ought" from "Is" is not only possible but also necessary in some cases according to logical rules. Rejecting the "Derivation ought from is" would be a "Harmful fallacy" for ethics, law, religion, and all human sciences (Mesbah, *Negahi Gozara beh Hokhooq Bashar az Didgahe Islam*, pp.203-222). It is noticeable that Allah has sent his great prophets to guide his servants upon this kind of necessity, that is, comparative necessity (Mesbah, *Ensan Shenasi dar Quran*, p.397; *Amoozesh Aqayed*, pp.215-220).

It is not acceptable that "Ideology" does not come from "World view" because, as discussed previously, some kind of "Ought" can be derived from "Is" (Ensan Shenasi dar Quran, p.426). In fact, we can conclude "Ought" from "Is" by analyzing facts (Mesbah, *Pishniazhay e Modyriat Islami*, pp.104-105). In other words, if there is a complete (necessary and sufficient) cause, we can conclude "Ought" from "Is" in this situation (Mesbah, *Pasokhe Ostad beh Javanan Porseshgar*, pp.77).

Professor Mesbah attempted to solve the "Is/ought problem" by addressing the question "Can we conclude ought from is or not?" He stated that there are two types of facts:

- 1) The fact that includes complete causes.
- 2) The fact that does not include complete causes.

If there are complete causes, we can logically conclude "Ought" from "Is" because this type of "Ought" comes from "Comparative necessity" as a kind of reality. It should be noted that in this instance, the term "Ought" means causal necessity. However, we cannot derive "Ought" from "Is" in the latter because there is no comparative causal necessity.

In general, Professor Mesbah Yazdi's theory about ethics is founded on the following principles:

1) A moral proposition, in itself, is not a prescriptive sentence that is not potentially true or false. Still, it is a decretive proposition that is true or false and requires a criterion for its truth (Mesbah, Doroos Falsafah Akhalaq, pp.117-126).

2) The subject of a moral proposition is "Human optional deeds" that fall under abstracted headlines like justice, truth, falsehood, and others.

3) The predicate of a moral proposition, such as good and bad, indicates "comparative necessity" between "Human optional deeds" and their consequences.

4) The things that lead to human happiness and perfection are considered good. 5) In fact, true human happiness, which is associated with his perfection, can only be achieved by getting closer to Allah as the Absolute Perfection through the process of servanthood and worship (Mesbah, Doroos Falsafah Akhalaq, pp.117-126).

Therefore, by using "Comparative necessity" between "Human optional deeds" and their goals (human happiness and perfection), the "is/ought" problem can be resolved in this theory. Allameh's theory is concentrated and based on "Comparative necessity," which is a philosophical expression known to philosophers like Avicenna (Elahyyateshefa, p.366), Shirazi (Asfar, Vol.1, pp.126-128), Tabatabaei (Nehayatolhekmeh, Stage4, chapter2, pp.49-51), Mesbah (Talighah ala Nehayatolhekmah, taligha65-66; Sharhe Elahyyatshefa, Vol.1, pp.321-339 & Vol.2, pp.241-242). Thus, it is clear that Professor Mesbah utilized this philosophical expression (comparative necessity) as the best approach to addressing the Is/Ought problem and linking "Value" to the "Fact."

## 9. Comparison

Now, we move on to the comparison and criticism of the various approaches and theories for solving the "Is/Ought problem." As discussed earlier, there are different ways to address the problem, including the following theories:

- 1) Solving the problem by omitting it;
- 2) Solving the problem through counterexamples;
- 3) Solving the problem by rejecting is-ought dualism and believing in monism on "Is/Ought" terms;
- 4) Solving the problem through modal deontic logic; and

5) Solving the problem through comparative necessity (the theory of Professor Mesbah).

The first theory (TI) attempts to solve the "Is/Ought" problem by omitting it and claiming that David Hume did not intend to raise this problem. However, this theory fails to eliminate the problem, as it remains a genuine concern, regardless of Hume's intentions.

The second theory (TII) tries to solve the problem through counterexamples, as John Searle does by using institutional facts. While this approach may be effective in some instances, it cannot address the problem in all situations.

The third theory (TIII) seeks to resolve the problem by rejecting is-ought dualism and relying on "Is/Ought" monism. Yet, this solution has potential drawbacks, as it may undermine the real meanings of expressions and create further difficulties.

The fourth theory (TIV) attempts to address the "Is/Ought" problem through modal deontic logic. However, this approach may not be realistic, as it may be challenging to create a modal deontic logic system with this problem as a significant obstacle.

Finally, the fifth theory (TV) proposes solving the problem through comparative necessity, as Professor Mesbah's theory suggests. This approach is likely the most effective solution to the problem as it connects human actions and their consequences through comparative necessity. In fact, this theory seems capable of solving and eradicating the challenging puzzle and perplexing problem that has persisted from Hume to the present. The theory explains that value statements represent declarative propositions that reflect factual information, making them true when they correspond to fact and false when they do not. Therefore, considering sentences that contain "Ought" as prescriptive rather than descriptive is a fallacy as the criteria for a sentence to be a declarative and descriptive proposition lies in its representation of fact.

I am pleased to say that the final theory capable of solving the problem is the doctrine proposed by Professor Allameh Mesbah Yazdi through the lens of comparative necessity.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, we can determine from the discussion of the "Is/Ought" problem that it has been a persistent challenge from Hume to the present,

and numerous theories have been proposed to address or dismiss it. This article clarifies that this problem is, in fact, a fallacy, despite some theories striving to convince us otherwise and maintain it as an insurmountable issue. However, there have been several promising approaches presented for solving the problem.

Furthermore, this essay delves into two main categories of theories - negative and positive - and then analyzes and critiques them. Ultimately, the theory of Allameh Mesbah Yazdi for solving the Is/Ought problem with "Comparative Necessity" is introduced, explained, and earnestly defended as the most optimal solution to the "Is/Ought" problem.

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