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New Way of Resolving Fact-Value Dilemma

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Abstract: [Fact-value or *is-ought* dilemma is a vital issue of contemporary moral philosophy. British philosopher David Hume raised the issue at first. Moral philosophers have contributed each other interpreting Hume's '*is-ought'* passage in many ways. Some moral philosophers believe that there is no relation between factual statement and value statement. They argue that it is absolutely impossible to derive a value statement or moral statement from *factual* or *is statement*(s). But others claim that value can be derived from fact.

We believe and shall argue that both these views are partially right. Those who believe that *value statement* cannot be derived from *factual statement(s)* are right in the sense that *value statement* cannot be derived from *factual statement(s)* formally or deductively. They are wrong in saying that *value* or *moral statement* cannot be derived from *factual statement(s)* at any way. Similarly, those who claim that *value statement* can be derived from *factual statement(s)* are partially right in the sense that there is a way to draw value or *moral statement* from *factual statement(s).* We believe and will try to establish the fact that *value statement* can only be drawn from *is statement(s)* through informal logic.]

Introduction

There is an unresolved dilemma in meta-ethics as to whether one can arrive at *value* from *fact.* Naturalists and neo-naturalists believe that we can define or derive *value statement* from *factual statement(s).* On the other hand intuitionists, radical subjectivist and prescriptivists reject any logical relation between *factual statement* and *value statement*. They claim that any attempt to drive *factual statement(s)* to *value statement* must commit *naturalistic fallacy*. It is worth noting that there is a historical debate between Searle and Hare in which they respectively say, "value can be derived from fact" and "value cannot be derived from fact." We are in agreement with Hare that formal deduction from *fact* to *value* is not possible, but we believe that there is a logical connection between *fact* and *value*. This belief is very important for us to break *fact-value* dilemma. To resolve this dilemma we shall adopt historical and analytic method. We shall make a survey and explore the writings of those moral philosophers who talked about *fact-value* relation. Furthermore, we shall also examine and analyze their arguments and counter arguments. Finally we shall use informal logic such as, conduction and legal reasoning as tools of resolving the *fact-value* dilemma.

Source of the dilemma:

The dilemma whether *value* can be derived from *fact* or in other words, *ought* can be derived from *is* originated from a famous passage of Hume - *A Treatise of Human Nature*, where he says,

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> 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 sudden I am surprised to find that, instead of the usual copulations of prepositions *is* and *is not*, I meet with no proposition that is not connected with an *ought* or *ought not* this change is imperceptible but is, however, of the last consequence. For as this *ought* or *ought not* …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 deduction from others. (Hume, III, i, 1).

This article is quoted many times by the philosophers in support of their views that *value* cannot logically be derived from *fact*, that is, no value statement follow from any statement of fact. R.M. Hare calls this impassibility between *fact* and *value* as **Hume's law**. The interpretation, which maintains it, is known as accepted interpretation. Hume is saying that some careless authors try to deduce *value* statement from *factual* statement through deduction and such kind of attempt seems altogether *inconceivable*, He is saying here that there is a logical gulf between *fact* and *value*, that is, no set of descriptive (*is)* statements can entail an evaluative (*ought*) statement without the addition of at least one evaluative (*ought)* premise.

Some philosophers challenge the accepted interpretation and offer a new interpretation. They argue that, in his passage Hume says that there is a logical connection between *factual* statement and *value* statement, which some philosophers fail to see. Thus there is no logical gulf between *fact* and *value*. We can deduce *value* statement from *factual* statement. When someone derives *value* from *fact* Hume just wants explanations and reasons regarding how the derivation is possible. For example, Hume writes, "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". (Hume, III, i, 1).

Professor J.R. Searle in his article *How to derive ought from is* published in the philosophical review, 1964, where he claims, we can derive a value or moral conclusion from the premises absolutely factual. Let us see how Searle formulates his derivation:

Searle-Hare debate on *Fact-value* dilemma:

There are many writings on *Fact-value* dilemma. But here we will consider only Searle-Hare debate to have an understanding of the problem. Professor J. R. Searle tries to derive *ought* from *is* and R. M. Hare disagrees with him. In his article, Searle claims that we can derive an *ought* conclusion from *is* statement(s).

He depicts with a case of an evaluative (*ought)* conclusion derived exclusively from descriptive *(is)* premises, which he defends. Then he outlines a theory of language that generates an indefinite case of the type. Searle begins his five steps of derivation with a purely descriptive statement or brute fact such as, *Jones uttered the words, I hereby promise to pay…* and to continue by a series of reasoning moves to the institutional fact and finally reaches to pure evaluative conclusion 'Jones ought to pay….'

The proof discloses the relation between the utterance of certain words and the speech act of promising and then it turn promising into commitment that moves from obligation to *'ought*'. He explains every step. He designs his argument as follows:

1) Jones uttered the words, "I hereby promise to pay you, Smith, five dollars".
2) Jones promise to pay Smith five dollars.
3) Jones placed himself under an obligation to pay smith five dollars.
4) Jones is under an obligation to pay Smith five dollars.
5) Jones ought to pay Smith five dollars.

The relation between any statement and its successor, according to Searle, though not in every case one of *entailment* and same as a contingent relation, the supplementary statements are required to make the link one of entailment. Additional statements do not link with any evaluation, and don't need to invoke any evaluative statement or moral principle. No evaluations are suppressed in the additional premises. These statements are empirical, tautological and descriptions of word usages. Searle explains,

(1a) Under certain condition C any one who utters the words "I hereby promise to pay you, Smith, five dollars", promises to pay Smith five dollars.
For the act of promising the conditions must be empirical, such as the speaker and the hearer are both conscious, speak in English, speaking seriously; the speaker knows what he is doing, not under the influence of drugs, not hypnotized, or not acting in a play, not telling a joke or reporting an event etc.

(1b) Conditions C obtain.
From 1. (1a), and (1b) 2 is derived.
Between (2) and (3) Searle takes 'promise' by its definition: an act of placing oneself under an obligation. So, (2) entails (3) straight off. The tautological premise is:
(2a) All promises are acts of placing oneself under an obligation to do what are promised.

In the case of relation between (3) and (4), Searle offers the *ceteris paribus* clause. There may arise some unnecessary causes or situations which can void the obligation. So, *ceteris paribus* is necessary to secure the derivation. Thus we get another tautological premise for an entailment.

(3a) other things are equal.
(3b) All those who place themselves under an obligation are, other things being equal, under an obligation.

From (3), (3a) and (3b), (4) is derived.
The relation between (4) and (5) the additional statement is also tautological.
(4a) Other things being equal.
(4b) All those who are under an obligation to do an act 'ought', other things being equal, to do that act.
Thus Searle derives evaluative (*ought)* statement from factual (*is)* premises.

R.M. Hare analyses Searle's derivation in his book, *Promising game* (1964, 144). He mainly attacks the status of the extra premise, which Searle imports between (1) to (2) and (2) to (3) as an entailment. He says Searle's extra premise (1a) contains a synthetic evaluation or moral prescription. Hare connects the matter to the conception of *institutional fact:*

> It may seem as if the 'brute fact' that a person has uttered a certain phonetic sequence entails the 'institutional fact' that he has promised, and that this in turn entails that he ought to do a certain thing. But this conclusion can be drawn only by one who accepts, in addition, the non-tautologies principle that one ought to keep one's promises. For unless one accepts this principle, one is not a subscribing member of the institution which it constitutes, and therefore cannot be compelled logically to accept the institutional facts which it generates in such a sense that they entail the conclusion, ...(Hare, 155).

Hare combines Searle's (1a) and (2a) into a single constitutive rule:

(1a*) *under certain condition C anyone who utters the words, "I hereby promise to pay Smith five dollars" place himself under an obligation to pay Smith five dollars.*

Hare argues that the statement (1a*) contains a synthetic evaluation or prescription not merely about word usages. He claims that (1a*) is not a tautology. Hare constitutes another proposition as follows which contains (1a*) and is clearly a tautological.

(1a*+) *According to the rules of an institution whose rules say "Under certain conditions C anyone who utters the words 'I hereby promise to pay you, Smith, five dollars' places himself under an obligation to pay Smith five dollars.*

Hare says, (1a*) itself is not a tautology. He alerts us "we must not be misled into thinking that, because it is a tautology that promising is an institution of which (1a*) is a constitutive rule, (1a*) itself is a tautology." (1969, 146).

Finally, Hare concludes that (1a*) is neither a synthetic statement nor a synthetic prescription about how English is or ought to be spoken. Introducing a word *promise*, we should not think that this makes (1a*) a tautology or a mere statement about word usage. It is an essence of a word like, *promise* that has a meaning only when certain synthetic proposition about how we should act is assented. Hare believes that (1a*) is a synthetic constitutive rule of institution of promising and the constitutive rules of promising are moral principle, so (1a*) is a synthetic moral principle. If (2a) is a tautology then (1a) either explicitly or implicitly contains a synthetic moral principle. Therefore, Hare concludes, Searle does not reach evaluative (*ought)* conclusion from exclusively factual (*is)* premises. He just draws an evaluative statement from premises of conceal evaluation.

We have seen how Searle tries to deduce *ought* from *is* and Hare rejected it. We believe that Hare is right in saying that Searle has not derived *value* from *fact* rather he derives *value* from *value*. Indeed *ought* cannot be derived from *is* deductively. According to deductive reasoning, no word or term can be drawn in the conclusion which is absent in the premise except addition. Any attempt to do so does commit a fallacy. But we do believe that there is a way called informal reasoning which allows the derivation of *value* from *fact*. Now let us see what informal reasoning is.

Informal reasoning

Generally, it is believed that any sort of reasoning must fall into either deductive or inductive categories. But recently, logicians disagree with this traditional view. They believe that there are some kinds of argument, which are neither deductive nor inductive. For example, in our day-to-day life conversation, in media reports, in legal debate, political debate and also in moral issues we frequently use arguments. But these arguments fall neither in the deductive nor in the inductive framework. They are not deductive, because their conclusion is not certain or conclusive. And they are not inductive, because their conclusion is not empirically verifiable. We apply this logic to ordinary situations and for decision making in daily circumstances without appeal to the details of formal logic. It aims at providing us with tools to assess and analyzes the ordinary kind of reasoning mentioned above. The informal logic tells us that it deals with our everyday practical logic which is not formal. This kind of logic started its journey in the late sixty's and early seventy's of the twentieth century and still it is flourishing. *Conduction* or *moral reasoning* and *legal reasoning* are two good examples of informal logic. Now we shall give an illustration of conduction and legal reasoning to grasp the nature of informal logic as well as to make it clear how *value statement* can be derived from *factual statement(s)* informally. In other words, legal reasoning and conduction will help us to understand how value or *ought* statement can be derived from factual or *is* statement(s).

Conduction

Carl Wellman advocates conduction. He defines conduction "as a kind of reasoning in which the conclusion about some individual case is drawn non-conclusively from one or more premise(s) about the same case without any appeal to other cases." (1970, 52). Conduction is one kind of value reasoning where a value or *ought* conclusion is drawn on the basis of some factual or *is* premises(s). So a discussion of conduction will help us to understand how a value statement can be derived from factual premises(s).

According to Wellman, there are three patterns of conduction. The first pattern consists of one premise and the conclusion. In this pattern other premises are not added because the reason given by the single premise is so clear and powerful that it alone is enough to draw the conclusion.

For example,

You promised to marry Smitha. (*Factual statement*)

Therefore, you ought to marry Smitha. (*Value statement*)

The second pattern consists of more than one premise to draw the conclusion. Here each premise provides independently positive reason for the conclusion, for example,

You are wealthy. (*Factual statement*)
You are generous. (*Factual statement*)
Your neighbor is poor. (*Factual statement*)

Therefore, you ought to help your neighbor. (*Value statement*)

In the third pattern of conduction the conclusion is drawn from both positive and negative premises(s). The positive premises provide favorable reasons for the conclusion and the negative premise(s) provide reasons against the conclusion.

For example,

He is impolite.	(*Factual statement*)
He is eccentric	(*Factual statement*)
He is honest.	(*Factual statement*)
He is kind.	(*Factual statement*)
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Therefore he is good.	(*Value* or *ought* statement*)*

Here two premises are positive. They provide reasons for the conclusion. And two other premises are negative and provide reasons against the conclusion. But the reasons for are stronger than the reasons against. Thus the argument presents us a convincing evidence to tell the person well.

All the three patterns of argument, mentioned here consist of factual premise(s) and evaluative conclusion. In our day-to-day life we frequently use such types of arguments. But these arguments are neither deductive nor inductive, they are informal. They are not deductive, because their conclusion is not certain. For it is always possible that the additional information may make the conclusion false. Even if the original premise(s) remain true. But we know that in deductive argument the conclusion is always certain. So conduction does not guarantee the certainty of the conclusion-it only supports the conclusion to different degrees.

Conduction is neither inductive. Although its premise(s) are factual, its conclusion is not factual or empirical like the inductive argument. Further more, in induction, the probability of conclusion generally depends on the number of positive instances, but the acceptability of the conclusion of conduction depends on the relevance of the premise(s).

Thus we can conclude that conduction which provides us value statement on the basis of factual statement(s) is neither deductive nor inductive. It is informal. In other words, we can reach moral statement from factual statement(s) through conduction; i.e., through informal way.

Legal Reasoning

Legal reasoning is another branch of informal logic. Like conduction, legal reasoning also allows us to draw value (*ought*) conclusion from factual (*is*) premise(s). Let us consider the following example:

Suppose Rumi stole a gold ring from a shop. Now if the case goes to the court and the judge is convinced that it is true that Rumi stole the gold ring then the court will declare Rumi guilty.

Here judge pronounced a value (*ought*) judgment: 'Rumi is guilty' on the basis of a factual (*is*) statement(s), 'Rumi stole a gold ring from a shop'.

To make it more clear let us arrange the same argument in the following way to show how a value or *ought* statement is derived from *is* statement in legal reasoning.

Rumi stole a gold ring.	*(Factual statement)*
Rumi is guilty.	*(Value statement)*
Rumi committed wrong.	*(Value statement)*
Therefore, Rumi ought to be punished.	*(Value statement)*

Here the conclusion of legal reasoning 'Rumi ought to be punished' is not empirically verifiable. Thus legal reasoning is conceptual in the sense that here the conclusion is drawn on the basis of the meaning of the term(s) used in premise(s).

Legal reasoning is also different from deduction. We know that the conclusion of a deduction is always certain. On the other hand, the conclusion of a legal reasoning is not certain; its conclusion is only probable. The reason is that the conclusion of a legal reasoning is changeable. For example, if Rumi steals a gold ring and if the lower court declares him guilty or declares that 'Rumi is wrong' or 'Rumi ought to be punished', then Rumi can appeal to the higher court and the higher court may disagree with the verdict of the lower court.

From the above discussion we can say that legal reasoning is neither inductive nor deductive. But it is a genuine reasoning process, because according to Lemmon, legal reasoning is acceptable to all. Therefore it shows us how value (*ought*) statement can be drawn from factual (*is*) statement(s) informally. In legal reasoning the premise (e.g. Rumi stole a gold ring.) is factual or *is* statement; but the conclusion (Rumi is wrong) is value or *ought* statement, and the conclusion does not derive from the premise formally. As a result legal reasoning again helps us to derive *value* statement from *factual* statement(s).

Conclusion

The aim of this article is to resolve *fact-value* dilemma. Here we have shown how informal reasoning allows us to derive *value or moral statement* from factual or *is statement(s).* For this, we inspect a passage of Hume in *A Treatise of Human Nature* which initiated the problem. And we have shown that there are mainly two interpretations of the passage, some believe that Hume wanted to say that the derivation of *value* from *fact* is impossible; while others believe that the derivation is possible but explanation is needed regarding how this derivation takes place. We accept the latter interpretation and have tried to provide reasons for '*value* can be derived from *fact'*. Searle, however, tries to show how *value* can be deduced from *fact.* But we agreed with Hare that a formal deduction of *value* from *fact* is not possible. Rather we have claimed that the deduction is possible informally. Finally we have presented conduction and legal reasoning as examples. We have argued that in conduction and legal reasoning it has been shown how to resolve *fact-value* dilemma.

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