



THE RELATION OF *OUGHT* AND *IS* FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF AYATULLAH MESBAH YAZDI

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ABSTRACT

If we consider the moral principles and judgments to be based on real things and believe in an ethical system in accordance with the system of generation and in accordance with its current laws, then we have a reasonable moral system that we can discuss about it. But if we have a way other than this, in any way, that moral system loses its rationality and cannot be judged with the reason and thought on its principles. In the first case, we have a set of fixed, general, and permanent principles that are in line with objective and noumenal things, and in other words, we have an absolute moral system. Otherwise, the moral judgments are completely meaningless and unreasonable, or result from the individual and collective emotions and desires that lead to relativism in ethics. The discussion of the relationship between ought and is is oriented to the question as to whether it is possible to derive from the "is" and the facts, the "ought" and moral judgments, and justify them on the basis of "is"; or whether between these is an impermeable dam that make it impossible to establish any relation between them. In this research, we have reflected the views of the contemporary philosopher, Professor Mesbah Yazdi, and finally we came to the conclusion that he has chosen the first case and believes in the relationship between is and ought.

Keywords: *ought and ought not, good and badness, mentally posited, declarative and performative sentences.*

INTRODUCTION

The discussion of "the relationship between is and ought" is one of the key issues in the ethics. In this discussion, the relationship between ethical statements and objective facts is examined. Can we derive from the "is" and the external facts the ought and "moral" judgments? In other words, can one establish on the basis of the facts a moral system and base the ethical principles and judgments on the system of generation?

In this regard, there are other questions that influence the fate of this discussion, such as whether ethical concepts and statements can represent the objective facts and the relations between them, or whether they are purely mentally-posed without any epistemological aspect.

The moral statements sometimes include "ought and ought not": "We ought to tell the truth", "we ought not lie"; sometimes they are expressed in the form of command and forbidding: say "truth", "do not cruelly", and sometimes as a declarative sentence: "Sacrifice is good," "Disregarding the poor is wrong." In the ethics, it has been argued whether the question of the

relation of moral statements to the objective facts only relates to those statements which include "ought and ought not", or whether they are more general or else.

The origin of this controversy is that some believe that such statements have a feature that the others have not. But the *locus communis* among the philosophers is that the above question includes all moral statements, whether they include "ought and ought not" or be expressed in other ways. The word "ought" is only a sign and symbol for moral statements. In the title of the article, we have followed the famous view (which is also the right), that is, the term "ought" here refers to all moral statements (Javadi, 1996).

The word "is" is of different uses that need to be addressed. The word "is" is used to link the subject and the predicate of the proposition, such as: "honey is sweet"; here the relationship between "honey" and "sweetness" is created by the is, but "is" itself is not but a relation and our attention in this proposition is focused on the subject and the predicate without considering "is". But if we say: "there is honey," the is "itself" is the predicate of the proposition, and that it is about being of the subject, and that our attention is directed to the meaning of "is". Technically speaking, here "is" has a relational existence of a relationship and "there is" a predicative existence (Haeri Yazdi, 1982).

But in our discussion, there is no difference between these two, that is, the statements of facts, either as "is" or "there is", both in our discussion are the same and "is" in the title of the treatise refers to the fact. What makes more necessary the discussion about is, is the defense of the moral values of Islam against the influx of Western intellectual and cultural doubts. The principles and judgments of Islamic ethics, as a large part of the teachings of the sacred religion of Islam, are eternal. Therefore, the induction of doubts such as the effect of time and place in changing the foundations of morality hurts the principle of religion and the immortality of its teachings (Motahari, 1994). In this research we are going to find answers to this question as to whether there is a kind of logical or non-logical relationship between "ought" and "is" from the perspective of Professor Mesbah Yazdi.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF RESEARCH

An analysis of moral concepts and sentences

Hume's question

The question of ought and is or, in other words, the derivation of moral statements from the statements of fact, was proposed for the first time by David Hume (1711-1776). This Scottish philosopher belongs to the school of empiricism, or better he is one of its founders. Hume raised his question based on the empiricism and on the denial of any metaphysics. Following him, this question has been followed and nowadays it is one of the main issues among the experts. Hume poses the following question: "What is the logical relationship between Is and Ought, and how can one deduce a conclusion of ought from the premises of is?" (Haeri Yazdi, 1982).

Hume begins his studies from the moral concepts and terms such as goodness, justice, virtue, vice, and so on. He finds in these cases that no visible fact or logical relation can be found for these concepts, and therefore concludes that the function of the moral terms does not refer to qualities or relations, but to some kind of feeling of admiration; so their meaning should be found in the feelings of someone who morally judges not in the object (Edwards, 1999).



Hume generally removes reason from the moral judgments and states that the reason does not interfere in the process of forming these concepts and the judgment on them; therefore, what is the origin of these concepts? Hume says feeling! "Therefore, more rigorously the moral is felt rather than judged" (Copleston, 1983).

The relation of ought and is

Although there are many differences in the interpretation of Hume's remarks, some consider him to believe in distinction between is and ought; while others, on the other hand, regard him as believing in the connection between is and ought, and each one suggests reasons from Hume's statements; but it is well-known that he believes in separation and essentially considers the deduction of statements consisting of the is of the statements of fact to be inaccurate (Javadi, 1996).

Hume wants to conclude that, in view of the difference between is and ought, the contradiction between moral virtue and vice is not a philosophical contradiction, but merely an ethical contradiction, and we have no such relationship in the real world. If you attribute the virtue or the vice to somebody, you cannot show them in the experience. Even with rational reason, we cannot prove that these concepts have an objective being; though, with his empirical logic, Hume does not accept the existence of God, nor the existence of the soul, but he says that the philosophers have proved these two based on the Logic of the facts, but in the realm of the moral they do not use this logic, but they want conclude the ought from the premises of is (Haeri Yazdi, 1982).

Universal concepts

In a division, the general concepts are divided into three categories: essential concepts, philosophical concepts, and logical concepts. This famous division, which is one of the innovations of the Muslim philosophers, has made a significant contribution to avoiding the confusion of concepts and engagement in long and futile debates.

1. Essential Concepts

It is a category of concepts that the mind abstracts individually from the particulars, for example, after seeing one or more white objects, it abstracts the general concept of "white." Or the concept of "fear" that is created after one or more times of special feeling (Mesbah Yazdi, 2000).

The abstraction of these concepts occurs naturally and does not require subtle mental reflections and activities. In other words, the mind here is more passive. Essential concepts are prior to the other two, because without the realization of essential concepts, the realization of philosophical and logical concepts will not be possible either. In this regard, the first category is called primary intelligibles and the other two are also secondary intelligibles (Fanayi Eshkavari, 1996).

2. Philosophical Concepts

To achieve this category of concepts, the mind needs to work and compare things with each other. For example, regarding the concept of cause and effect, the mind first finds two objects that existence of one of them depends on the existence of another, then, in view of this relationship and the comparison with each other, it abstracts the concept of cause and effect. If



this mental activity and the comparison of objects with each other are not carried out, then such concepts will never be obtained, for example, if we see the fire repeatedly and feel its heat, but there is no comparison between them and the emergence of each other is not considered, the concepts of cause and effect are never achieved (Mesbah Yazdi, 2000).

The common point of the essential and philosophical concepts is that both are predicated on the external objects, and their difference is that the essential concepts represent the nature of objects and their existential limitations. In other words, the essential concepts are considered to be empty forms for beings, and thus they are defined as "conceptual forms." But the philosophical concepts represent the existential mode of things (not their essential limitations), for example, when we use the notion of cause for fire, it never indicates the nature of the fire, but rather its relation to the heat, ie its effect (Mesbah Yazdi, 2000).

3. Logical Concepts

When human beings, using their perceptual forces, have received a certain amount of knowledge that its work is to represent the outside world, the mind focuses on the same knowledge and examines the problems of them and relations between them, and as a result, achieves some perceptions and judgments that indicate the state of affairs of the same primary knowledge. In other words, the mind at this stage does not focus on the outside world, nor even to the inner world (soul and its states), but rather represents that very knowledge. Concepts obtained in this way are called secondary concepts or logical concepts. Therefore, the feature of the logical concepts is that their objective reference is mental, and that the objects, both external and internal, are not attributed by these concepts, such as the concept of "general", "genus", "species" (Fanayi Eshavari, 1996).

Obligatory Concepts and normative Concepts

Ethical concepts are divided into two general categories:

Obligatory Concepts: Those concepts that have a command and task load, such as ought, ought not, duty, responsibility, etc.

Normative Concepts: Those ethical concepts that are of value and virtue load, such as good and bad, or good and bad, virtue, and vice. . .

Since the basis of the obligatory concepts is ought and ought not and the basis of the Normative Concepts is good and bad, and other obligatory concepts are synonymous with the first two terms and the normative concepts are synonymous with the two latter terms, or in a way reduced to them, so, the attention has been paid to these four concepts of "good and badness (or good and evil), and ought and ought not" (Abolqasemzadeh, 2005).

The concept of "ought"

One question about "ought" is whether this term is equal to "necessity" or only indicates the meaning of the two and not equal to them. In other words, we know that the "ought" is the verb and its use is limited to the verbs, but "necessity" indicates the relation between causes and effects; therefore, they are used to the objects too. In solving this problem, it must be said that the word *ought* implies "necessity", but is not equal to it (Modarresi, 1993).

Mesbah Yazdi's viewpoint on the meaning of "ought"

From his point of view, the words "ought" and "ought not" are used in two ways:

1. performative ought

Sometimes, these are used to command and forbid, and play the role of letter meanings; in this case, they themselves do not have an independent meaning, and they must come with a verb to replace the imperative and forbidding, for example, the phrase "you ought to go" rather than "go" and the phrase "you ought not go" instead of "do not go".

2. indicative ought

Sometimes these two terms have an independent concept and are used in the sense of "obligatory", "essential" and "necessary"; for example, instead of the phrase "we ought to treat fairly", which has a performative appearance, we can use the following statement: "The justice is obligatory," that is, the word "ought" has not been used here for the command, but useful in the meaning of "necessity", which implies that doing so is necessary (Mesbah Yazdi, 2002).

Professor Mesbah on the first application of "ought" and "ought not" states that there is no doubt that the two in this case, are mentally posited and performative and express the emotions and feelings of the speaker, and the person also may have no specific purpose and motive of this consideration. But it should be noted that if we want to have a reasonable and valid consideration, we will have to follow two points:

First, the mentally posing person has a reasonable purpose.

Secondly, what he commands and the consideration that he poses is truly in the service of providing his intended purpose. In other words, his consideration must be truthful and realistic, and based on genuine and justified criteria (Mesbah Yazdi, 2000).

But in the second application, in his view, the "ought" indicates a necessity between two things, a necessity in-relation-to-something-else. There is no difference in what science this ought is used and everywhere has one meaning:

"The concept of the ought used in different ways is no different lexically, as we say, how much oxygen and hydrogen should be combined to form water, either in mathematical or legal matters, the concept of the ought is the same in all of these, and although that is performative and mentally posited, but it is not a meaningless consideration; it is an expression of the truth that lies behind this consideration" (Mesbah Yazdi, 1988).

The difference between the normative "ought" and non-normative "ought"

The difference between "legal" and "moral" ought that is considered as "normative" in relation to the "natural" and "mathematical" ought, is in the particular restrictions which is included in them. In the natural and mathematical concepts, apart from the same philosophical necessity in-relation-to-something-else, there is nothing to be taken into consideration, that is, no special restriction is to be observed; "it must be done", that is, a necessity exists between them. But in the law and ethics this "ought" has a special restriction and it is a necessity that is considered between the verb and its consequence. Therefore, the consideration of "volitional action" is a difference between normative and non-normative concepts, and there is no change in the concept of "ought".

The difference between the ethical and legal "ought"

But the difference between the legal and ethical judgments, although both are related to the volitional action of humans and their necessity in relation to the purpose, is in their goal. The



purpose of the law is to meet the needs of the society; in order to achieve this goal, it does not matter whether the action is volitional or compulsory, in either case, the goal is provided. But in the moral judgments, there is a goal that does not take place except with a particular intention (hence the "intention" is required for moral acts, and as a result the moral action cannot be done in any way) (Mesbah Yazdi, 2000).

Good and bad

Islamic theologians have presented an extensive discussion of good and badness. The two main sides in this discussion are the Ash'arites, on the one hand, and the theodiceans, which includes the Imamites and the Mu'tazilites, on the other. Ash'arites denies the rational good and badness, and they are in favor of the canonical good and badness, that is, everything that is prescribed by the divine law is good, and that which it prevents, is bad, and the reason cannot understand the good and badness of the things. On the contrary, the theodiceans believe in the understanding of good and badness of things by reason.

Good and badness have various applications that we need to know to clarify the location of the conflict. Judge Azidedin Igi, the author of *al-mavaghef*, and its commentator, Mir Sharif Jorjani, tow followers of Ash'arites, said on their conflict with the Mu'tazilites: "Before discussing the argument, it is necessary to determine the dispute and refutation and demonstration are oriented to one thing" (Al-Igi, 1998).

Then he deals with different uses of good and badness and considers for them three meanings:

1. Perfection and Defect:

Good is an attribute of perfection, and the bad is an attribute of defect. It is said that the science is good, that is, anyone who is attributed to the science has the perfection and dignity. The ignorance is bad, that is, one who is attributed to it is defective. Good and badness in this sense is a constant attribute. Its perceiver is also reason and is not related to shariah. This is not a quarrel.

2. Agreeing and Opposition to the purpose:

What is in agreement with the purpose, is good, and what is contrary to the purpose, is called bad. And if it is neither agreed nor opposed with the purpose, it is neither good nor bad. Sometimes it is also interpreted as common good and corruption. That is, whatever is commonly good, is good, and what is corrupted, is bad. Apart from these two are neither good nor bad.

3. Deserving the praising and vilification and reward and punishment:

Any act whose subject is immediately praised and to which eventually belongs a reward is a good deed; and if it is immediately vilified and to which eventually belongs a punishment, that act is bad. Of course this is the case in the action of the servants; but in the acts of the Almighty God, the praising and vilification only is considered, not the reward and the punishment (Al-Igi, 1998). This meaning of good and badness is a controversy between the theodiceans and the Ash'arites.

The viewpoint of Professor Mesbah in on the good and badness



Professor Mesbah (referring to the theory of considerations) rejects the verbal analysis of the generation of these concepts and states that this kind of analyses does not solve in principle any problems, because our problem is a rational and philosophical problem, not a verbal and literary matter. After examining different points of view in terms of the generation of the concepts of good and bad, he concludes that these concepts are the source of external abstraction, and so-called are the philosophical concepts (Mesbah Yazdi, 2003).

He believes that in order to abstract the concept of goodness, there must be a fit between two things, that is, between two objective and external things, and not dependent on the taste of people. Of course, it may be that one of the two sides is human, but not because he has a particular taste, but because a perfection is realized outside for him. On the one hand, there is a human volitional act and on the other side his real and objective perfection. It is a good thing to do what leads to an ideal and to serve it, and the bad is whatever remove from it. Therefore, the good and badness of the human volitional act is obtained after the rational reflection and the comparison between that act and the ideal and it does not depend on our desire and taste and convention. (Mesbah Yazdi, 2003)

In short, the criterion for the goodness of some of our acts is the fit and coordination between them and our desired goal. Similarly, the criterion for the badness of some of our acts is the inconsistency and incompatibility with that desirable purpose. In other words, the concepts of moral good and bad are considered to be the instances of "causality", because, as causation is abstracted from the objective things, they can be attributed to the external objects and the external objects are attributed to them, the Good and badness are also abstracted from the relation of causality that exists between the human volitional action and his ideal. (Mesbah Yazdi, 2003)



Predication and performative action

A predicative sentence is a sentence by which the speaker wants to transmit a truth and a reality to the listener, and it is just a means to reach a predication to the audience; and if he has another purpose from saying the sentence, it is realized after transmitting that.

In contrast, the performative sentences are statements that the speaker does not want to transmit a reality, which is noumenally existing, but by using them, he wants to create the meaning of the sentence that comes from himself and from this statement, in the mind of the listener. (Mesbah Yazdi, 2003)

Therefore, the difference between the predication and the performative sentence can be stated that the predicative sentences are laid down for representing a relation that is realized noumenally between the subject and the predicate regardless of the speaker's speech, and the performative sentences are posited for the relation that is to be fulfilled through this sentence, and it is nothing regardless of this performance. (Modarressi, 1992).

What needs to be taken into account here is that knowing ethical sentences as predicative or performative is one of the most fundamental issues in moral philosophy, so that it divides moral schools on the same basis into descriptive schools and non-descriptive schools:

- A. Descriptive Schools: Believers in the descriptive theory that attributes to the ethical sentences a predicative feature; they often consider a logical relation between "ought" and "is", and know possible the deduction of the ought from the is.

- B. Non-descriptive schools: Believers in the non-descriptive theory based on which the ethical sentences do not inform the outside world, and on this basis, they consider to be a logical gap between "ought" and "is" (Javadi, 1996).

The Viewpoint of Professor Mesbah Yazdi

Given his analysis of the ethical concepts that he regarded them as representing the noumenal and objective relations between objects, he also sees the nature and truth of moral sentences as declarative. These propositions represent the noumenal reality and they are capable of being true and false. In his view, although some ethical judgments have a performative appearance, but this does not prevent them from their representativeness. According to the same analysis provided for the "ought", the same criterion that exists in the truth and falsehood of the empirical, philosophical, and logical propositions, is also found in moral propositions: the correspondence with the real and noumenal world (Mesbah Yazdi, 2003).

The Benefits of Using performative sentences in Ethics

It may be argued that if moral sentences have a predicative nature, and even the performative sentences can be reduced to the predicative ones, then why the ethics uses the performative form for the expression of the ethical judgments? If all the moral concepts represent a type of relationship between the volitional acts and their consequences, why instead of using the concepts of good and bad, and ought and ought, that relationship is not considered?

Professor Mesbah refers to two things:

1. ease and simplicity

According to him, one of the most important reasons for the use of moral concepts, instead of a detailed statement of the relation of the acts and their results, is the ease and simplicity; for example, instead of saying: "Truth creates social trust and health of group relationships, as well as the satisfaction of God, and lying provides weak social relationships and God's anger, it is said in a short, simply: "Telling Truth is good and lying is bad."

2. Educational role

Imperative and normative sentences have a more effective and more influential role in relation to the predicative propositions, since on the one hand, they increase the confidence of the person under teaching to the teacher's earnestness and truthfulness, and on the other hand, they motivate people and create a strong motive for doing ethical works; while the declarative and descriptive sentences cannot play such a role or at least a role like the performative ones (Mesbah Yazdi, 2003).

Professor Mesbah Yazdi on the relation between ought and is

We recall a summary of his perspectives, and then we deal with his view based on these premises:

1. In general, moral concepts are abstract concepts, that is, they are not abstracted directly from the external quiddities but are abstracted by the efforts of the mind on the primary concepts. Concerning the concepts of ought and ought not, good and bad, and the like, those that are in the place of predicate of moral propositions: they represent essentially the

- necessity in-relation-to-something-else and are philosophical concepts. Our minds abstract them by measuring the positive or negative effects that the subject has in reaching moral goals (Mesbah Yazdi, 2005).
2. The ethical judgments are indeed the declarative sentences that tell of a noumenal reality and do not differ from the empirical and mathematical judgments; therefore, the ethical propositions are true and false, and it is necessary to take into account a criterion for their truth and falsity (Mesbah Yazdi, 2005).
 3. According to the two abovementioned premises, the moral judgments are able to be demonstrated, and it is possible to confirm or reject them by relying on those external facts. It is also possible to use ethical propositions at the foundations of the demonstration. The fact that moral propositions are considered to be probable are not contradictory with their being able to be demonstrated. The result is that the ethical propositions are probable, but with reflection and precision they can be returned to the certain propositions, which then are the subject of the demonstration. What makes a proposition like "telling truth is good" to be considered probable is that it is not always good, for example, where an action makes an innocent to be killed, while the argument is non-exceptional. In order to resolve this doubt, it should be said that the real issue in this proposition is that truth that is done in order to achieve the desired perfection and is useful for this purpose. In general, for all ethical judgments, there are two general major premises, each subject when is placed under one of them, finds its true judgment and is qualified for demonstration. The first major is that "everything that is useful for our desired purpose is good," and the second, "everything is harmful to our desirable purpose, is bad" (Mesbah Yazdi, 2003).
 4. Ethics is not a matter separated from the worldview, because the recognition of the ideal in the presentation of ethical theories has a serious effect and is one of the main causes of ethical conflicts. It is clear that knowing the human ideal is a philosophical question and depends on the type of worldview (Mesbah Yazdi, 2005).



CONCLUSION

In order to solve the problem of ought and is, we must first clarify our position on the ethical concepts and sentences; therefore, in this article, first we discussed the ideas of contemporary thinkers about the moral concepts and sentences. Professor Mesbah Yazdi has the most explicit statement on this subject. He states that the moral concepts are concepts derived from the actual and objective relations between the things and, in fact, the moral sentences represent also these noumenal relations.

On the stability and durability of the ethical principles, professor Mesbah Yazdi explicitly defends the stability and eternity of the moral principles. Regarding the materials presented so far, it can be said that he believes in the relation between the ought and the is. The viewpoints of the professor Mesbah Yazdi are especially stringent. He has a clear statement about ethical concepts and sentences, proving their real representation, in which case we can judge about the ethical judgments and proceed argument in them. In this way, all the problems that have been raised so far cannot be proposed on the third viewpoint, and this is a privilege for this point of view compared to the other two points of view.

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