WHY NATURALISTIC FALLACY IS DIFFERENT FROM 'IS-OUGHT' FALLACY

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Abstract

Despite the clear and categorical stand on the ontological status of moral values, moral realism is bifurcated on the question of their ontological nature. Ethical naturalism, one of the moral realist theories upholds moral values to be real *because* they are natural, whereas Ethical Intuitionism upholds moral values to be real *because* they are non-natural. Based on its treatment of moral values as natural, Ethical naturalism has been accused of committing several philosophical errors or fallacies, most significant of those being Naturalistic fallacy and fallacy of derivation of 'ought' from 'is'. Although Ethical naturalism does indeed commit both of these fallacies, this paper argues that both of these are *different* errors, and the commission of one may not necessarily imply the commission of the other. In fact, the paper claims the confusion prevalent in literature, conflating one of these two fallacies with the other is a consequence of a certain misattributed reading of both Naturalistic fallacy and the fallacy of derivation of ought from is.

Keywords: Naturalistic fallacy, is-ought fallacy, moral beliefs, Moral Epistemology, Cognitive error, Cognitive incompetency

1.1 Introduction

Moral realism, as one of the meta-ethical positions, is characterized by its belief in the mind-independent existence of moral values, following which moral statements can be attributed of truth value, whereas the position of moral anti-realism, unlike that of moral realism, is characterized by its belief in mind-dependent existence of

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moral values, following which moral statements cannot be attributed of truth value. Neither of these camps, however, is in anyway homogenous, as there are several subgroups in both of them.

Moral realism is bifurcated on the question of the nature of moral values. Ethical naturalism, one of the moral realist camps, upholds moral values to be real *because* they are natural, whereas the other camp of Ethical Intuitionism upholds moral values to be real *not because* they are natural but *because* they are non-natural. Both camps, thus, agree on the *ontological status* of moral values being real although they disagree on the *ontological nature* of the same.

Corresponding to convictions of both camps regarding ontological nature and ontological status of moral values, philosophers raise two objections, namely Naturalistic fallacy and the fallacy of derivation of 'ought' from 'is' respectively. G. E. Moore charged Ethical naturalism of committing Naturalistic fallacy, while David Hume charged Ethical Naturalism of deriving 'ought' from 'is'. As both charges are leveled against the naturalized theories of ethics, there is a tendency to treat these fallacies as highlighting the same error in Ethical naturalism. Several scholars claim that both G. E. Moore and David Hume through their respective fallacies called attention to the erroneous derivation of 'values' from 'facts' by ethical naturalism.

I attempt to challenge this presumption in this paper. I argue that both G. E. Moore and David Hume have different objections against Ethical naturalism, which can specifically be appreciated in the light of their respective meta-ethical frameworks. Hence, my effort here will be to delineate Naturalistic fallacy from the 'is-ought' fallacy in the light of their respective meta-ethical frameworks.

1.2 Naturalistic fallacy-'Is-Ought' fallacy: An Ostensive Similarity

G. E. Moore's fundamental objection against Ethical Naturalism is discussed in his text *Principia Ethica (PE).*[1] In this text, Moore accuses Ethical Naturalism of committing a Naturalistic fallacy for their definition of good in terms of natural property or a natural state of affairs.[2] Moore writes,

> [Though] it is a fact, that Ethics aims at discovering what are those other properties belonging to all things which are good…But far too many philosophers have thought that when they named those other properties they were actually defining good [and] that these properties, in fact, were simply not 'other,' but absolutely and entirely the same with goodness. This view I propose to call the 'Naturalistic fallacy'…[3]

Moore substantiates his claim of Naturalistic fallacy by providing an open-question argument, according to which, there cannot be any analytic yet significant definition of good. Perhaps for this claim of Moore, wherein he is directly displaying his discomfort with the treatment of normative claims of ethics as descriptive claims, scholars treat him as being in opposition to the derivation of 'ought' from 'is'.

The philosopher who opposes such a derivation of 'ought' from 'is' is David Hume. Hume's conceptualization of the 'is-ought' fallacy is particularly documented in his *Treatise of Human Nature*.[4] The often-quoted paragraph of Hume is found at the end of section 3.1.1 where Hume writes,

> 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 copulations 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 … [I] am persuaded, that a small attention [to this point] would subvert all the vulgar systems of morality, and let us see, that the distinction of vice and virtue is not founded merely on the relations of objects, nor is perceived by reason.[5]

Here, Hume holds that many of the previous systems of ethics had erroneously derived statements of 'ought' from premises that were 'is' statements. Explicating his contention, Hume argues that one cannot logically derive an ought statement that necessarily entails an obligatory force from premises that pertain to the realm of matters of fact. In other words, Hume's simple assertion is that an obligatory norm can only be entailed by other norms with similar obligatory force. Hume's argument for the distinction between the realm of 'is' and the realm of 'ought' is, therefore, read as emphasizing the apparent distinction between facts and values, or the distinction between descriptive statements and normative ones.

Such a reading of Hume's 'is-ought' fallacy is then seen, as William Frankena highlights[6], as the precursor to Moore's Naturalistic fallacy by several scholars such as D. C. Williams, T. Whittaker who interpret Moore to be establishing an unbridgeable gap between the realm of facts and that of values. T. Whittaker, writing as early as in 1916 after

the publication of *PE*, considers the separation of 'ought' from 'is' as nothing but "the classical statement of separation of ethics from metaphysics".[7] He argues that all other theories of ethics, except Aristotle's and Kant's, do commit the 'is-ought' fallacy, for "they proceed as if *ought or ought not* can follow immediately, without the introduction of any new principle, from *is or is not*".[8] Explicating the difference between Metaphysics and Ethics, Whittaker argues that, unlike Metaphysics which, on the one hand, caters to the 'realm of is', and thereby the nature of things that exist, Ethics, on the other hand, caters to our choices of bringing something into existence which is, so far, undetermined. Consequently, to deduce something of the obligatory from something which is devoid of obligatory force is precisely the fallacious move of deducing 'ought' from 'is'. Identifying Hume's 'is-ought' fallacy with Moore's Naturalistic fallacy, Whittaker writes, "The writer who has tracked down these fallacies most effectively is G. E. Moore in *PE*."[9] Whittaker considers these two fallacies to be similar precisely because he identifies Moore's discomfort with the identification of 'good' with 'pleasure' as grounded in his discomfort with the identification of *ought* with *is*. Towards this end, Whittaker asserts,

> To determine the order of goods from the scale of beings according to the degree in which these are "real" is a most typical expression of the "metaphysical fallacy"; as the precept to "live according to nature" is a direct expression of the "naturalistic fallacy," which is merely another form of the first.[10]

According to Whittaker, *the scale of beings* and *the scale of obligations* are mutually exclusive, and to conflate both is to commit Naturalistic fallacy, or 'is-ought' fallacy. It is evident here that treating these two fallacies as arguing for the distinction of *obligation* from bare *existence* leads to an easy conflation between Hume's 'is-ought' fallacy and Moore's Naturalistic fallacy.

In a similar vein, Donald Carry Williams upholds such a reading of these two fallacies. Writing in the nineteen-thirties, Williams argues that the non-natural and indefinable nature of good, proposed by Moore, is nothing but the indefinable or unanalyzable nature of 'obligatoriness' or 'oughtness' of good. That is to say that, in William's opinion, Moore, by virtue of establishing the indefinability of good, wanted to argue for its peculiar mark of obligatory force which cannot be exhaustively analyzed in terms of anything else. D. C. Williams writes, "The sanction, real obligatoriness, of the obligation, lies apparently in another dimension from any of its describable

content."[11] Moreover, it is for the same reason that Williams believes it to be obvious to "suppose that goodness is an indefinable quality".[12] As a result of this, for him, "it seems appropriate also to chastise as 'the naturalistic fallacy' the attempt to derive the 'ought' from the 'is', for the 'ought' and the 'is' seem to be citizens of different realms of being."[13] Thus, it is by identifying Moore's insistence of good as a non-natural property with the obligatory force entailed by good that Williams attempts to establish the kinship between Moore's Naturalistic and Hume's 'is-ought' fallacy.[14]

This tendency to treat Moore's Naturalistic fallacy and Hume's 'is-ought' fallacy as two different expressions of the same philosophical distinction between fact and values, or descriptive statements and normative statements seems to persist throughout the twentieth century when reflecting on Moore's Naturalistic fallacy. For example, John Searle's seminal work, which pioneered a distinct reading of Hume in 1964, too exhibited similar confusion. In his paper, 'How to derive "ought" from "is"', Searle writes,

> Put in more contemporary terminology, no set of descriptive statements can entail an evaluative statement without the addition of at least one evaluative premise. To believe otherwise is to commit what has been called the naturalistic fallacy.[15]

In this paper, Searle justifies the derivation of 'ought' from 'is' by primarily grounding it in the distinction that he makes between *institutional facts* and *brute facts*. Searle argues that though it is illegitimate to derive 'ought statements' from 'is statements', such illegitimacy, must, nevertheless, be qualified insofar as the 'is statements' must necessarily pertain to brute facts. Searle then goes on to argue the legitimacy of deriving 'ought statements' from 'is statements' by preconditioning such a derivation as necessarily referring to institutional facts rather than brute ones. He asserts that brute facts are facts governed by "regulative rules [which] regulate activities whose existence is independent of the rules [whereas institutional facts are governed by] constitutive rules [which] constitute (and also regulate) forms of activities whose existence is logically dependent on the rules".[16] Searle believes that it is with these kinds of constitutive rules that the domain of morality is made up of. Consequently, according to him, it is perfectly possible to derive 'ought statements' from 'is statements' within the domain of morality.

Searle's justification of the derivation of 'ought' from 'is' also explicates the possible rationale behind Hume's discomfort with the

derivation of 'ought' from 'is'. In Searle's view, it is this supposed rationale harbored by Hume that brings Moore's Naturalistic fallacy closer to Hume's 'is-ought' fallacy.

For Searle, the rationale to oppose the derivation of an *ought* from *is* was grounded primarily in the acknowledged distinction between the speech act of description and that of evaluation. The distinction between these two forms of speech acts was then construed to reflect the "distinction between utterances which involve claims objectively decidable as true or false and those which involve claims not objectively decidable, but which are 'matters of personal decision' or 'matters of opinion'".[17] As Searle sees it that the derivation of *ought* from *is* was prohibited, for this distinction was fallaciously misconstrued as the variety of the distinction between *matters of objective ontology* and the *matters of subjective preferences*. It is on account of this acknowledged distinction that Searle holds Hume to argue for the non-derivability of ought from *is*. Interestingly, Searle then goes onto assert this to be the very rationale for Moore to argue for the indefinability of good in terms of any natural property or natural state of affairs. This makes it evident that Searle reads Moore's discomfort with the available definitions of good as grounded in the inviolability of deriving an ethical conclusion solely from non-ethical, descriptive premises.

The dominance and the prevalence of drawing such similarities between Naturalistic fallacy and 'is-ought' fallacy can be gauged from the fact that scholars like Stephen W. Ball, one of the contemporary scholars on Moore's critique of reductionism in ethics, goes on to emphasize that "…Moore applies this label [Naturalistic fallacy] also to attempts by naturalists at bridging Hume's gap between "is" and "ought' with a premise defining the latter in terms of former".[18]Though Stephen J. Ball does not ground his identification of Naturalistic fallacy with 'is-ought' fallacy on the basis of the obligatory force entailed by the term 'good', as is done by scholars like Searle, Whittaker, and D. C. Williams, they all are, nevertheless, in agreement insofar as they all unanimously hold both these fallacies to be making a similar point. Following this discussion, therefore, it can be seen that the dominant trajectory of establishing kinship between Moore's Naturalistic fallacy and Hume's 'is-ought' fallacy is fundamentally grounded in the firm belief that both these fallacies are ultimately rooted in the philosophical distinction between descriptive statements and evaluative statements or between facts and values.

I argue that the intent to establish such a kinship between both these fallacies is most forthrightly entailed by the semantic reading of Moore's open-question argument and Naturalistic fallacy. In

the section that follows, I seek to unfold such an implication, and consequences that of.

1.3 Naturalistic fallacy – is-ought fallacy: A Dubious Comparison

As indicated earlier, for Moore, the available definitions of good amount to the commission of *Naturalistic fallacy*, a fallacy which forms the cornerstone of Moorean critique of ethical naturalism. Moore's criticism of Ethical naturalism is fueled by his emphatic justification in the form of an open-question argument. He contends that in the light of the evident failure of the traditional ethical theories to account for the demand of analyticity that is posited by the notion of a 'definition', what consequently follows is that,

> …whatever definition be offered, it may be always asked, *with significance*, of the complex so defined, whether it is itself good.[19] [Emphasis is mine]

In other words, Moore argues that the very possibility of such a question is clearly suggestive of the fact that the definition so offered within the traditional ethical theories of the complex 'good' fails to respond to the demand of analyticity. An analytic definition forecloses the possibility of any question that significantly challenges the truth of the definition by the very fact of its analyticity. Moore contends that any definition of 'good' that is susceptible to such an open question is indicative of the fact that the definition provided for the notion of 'good' does not answer the demand of analyticity, insofar as, the *definiendum* and the *definiens* invoke "two different notions before our minds".[20] Thus, an 'open-question' argument establishes that any attempted analysis of the predicate 'good' in terms of anything other than itself invariably fails. Hence, such indefinability of the notion of good is grounded in the fact that the predicate that is denoted by the term 'good' is a "*simple*, and therefore, is *unanalyzable*".[21]

This way of establishing the simple, unanalyzable, and non-natural nature of good through an open-question argument has been misconstrued in Moorean literature as being a semantic move. Within the framework of the semantic reading, Moore's concern with good is seen, primarily, as a concern with the term 'good', and thereby, as a concern with the 'meaning' of the term 'good'. In this framework, the indefinability of good is understood as the semantic irreducibility of the term 'good' to any other term.[22] Thus, according to the semantic reading, Moore's ontological commitment to the nature of good, if any, is merely an entailed commitment that follows

from his semantic contribution pertaining to the meaning of the term 'good' or the concept of good.

Allan Gibbard, a defender of the semantic reading, asserts that, by terming 'good' to be indefinable in terms of anything else, Moore establishes the distinction "between questions of meaning and questions of substance", squarely placing the thesis of indefinability of 'good' as the question of meaning, and thereby a semantic question.[23] On a similar trajectory, in line with the semantic reading, Donald Regan argues that 'concepts' are logical whereas 'properties' are ontological, and what Moore successfully emphasizes through the thesis of indefinability of 'good' is the fact that the *concept* of good is indefinable rather than stressing upon the ontologically simple nature of the property of good.[24]

The dominant trend followed within the semantic framework has been largely dismissive with respect to the tenability of Moore's ontological commitment, or in a few cases completely denied. For instance, Regan's argument that Moore does not "distinguish between 'properties' and 'concepts'" when complemented with his insistence that Moore's thesis of indefinability pertains to the concept of good, leads one to conclude that Moore, therefore, in his *PE*, cannot be concerned with any ontological entailments. However, though by and large, a semantic reader of *PE* would not make such a strong claim as Regan's, nevertheless, they would cast doubts pertaining to the viability of Moore's ontological commitments. Towards this end, scholars like Gilbert Harman and Hilary Putnam, staying within the framework of semantic reading of Moore's 'open-question' argument, in asserting the semantic emphasis in Moore's indefinability thesis of good, nevertheless, go on to insist that the ontological entailments of Moore's semantic commitment are too weak to be legitimately asserted. Thus, Putnam asserts that Moore's thesis of indefinability of 'good' is not adequate to throw light upon the ontological nature of 'good' as itself being simple.[25]

Moreover, the dominance of the semantic reading of Moore's 'open-question' argument is evident from the fact that Moore's *PE* is generally credited to have inaugurated a distinct realm of enquiry, commonly labeled as Meta-ethics, to cater into the inquiry of the semantic worth of the term 'good' through an elucidative elaboration on the meaning of the concept of good. That is, following the semantic reading, it is generally held that Moore's thesis of semantic irreducibility of the term 'good' resulted in the postulation of two distinct, though related, realms of inquiry, namely that of Meta-ethics as a realm of semantic enquiry, and that of ethics, as a realm of enquiry into the practical worth of actions.

Further, the semantic framework, through its rendering of Moore's thesis of indefinability of the term 'good' as a thesis of semantic irreducibility, and the entailed assertion that Moore's Naturalistic fallacy is a logical consequence of this semantic irreducibility of the term 'good', I believe, is what opens up the problematic assertion that Moore's indefinability thesis is nothing but his opposition to define the *evaluative* term 'good' in terms of any *descriptive* terms denoting natural properties, thereby leading to the erroneous treatment of Moore's Naturalistic fallacy as analogous to Hume's 'is-ought' fallacy.

Such a parallel, I suppose, is further strengthened by a certain reading of Hume wherein his emphasis on the non-derivability of 'ought' from 'is', is coupled with the invocation of the faculty of intuition by several scholars as, in their opinion, this makes Hume's insistence on the irreducibility and the non-derivability of 'ought' from 'is', more consistent and comprehensible.[26] In other words, within such a reading of Hume, wherein he is solely understood to be making the point of non-derivability of 'ought' from 'is', the notion of the faculty of intuition creeps into the picture, to ensure that there is some faculty from which 'ought' statements emanate because they are not derived from 'is' statements. This is what intuitionists, in general, assert because through the invocation of the faculty of intuition in terms of moral cognition, what they seek to fundamentally claim is that the faculty of intuition confers moral worth on moral statements.

Strangely these scholars, without bothering to investigate Moore's idea of intuition, squarely associate such perceived intuitionism of Hume with Moore's adherence to intuitionism. Thus, intuitionism attributed to Hume, on the other hand, and misunderstood intuitionism of Moore, on the other, opens up its pathway to consider Moore's Naturalistic fallacy as a variety of Hume's 'is-ought' fallacy. Not only this avenue confuses Moore's notion of the faculty of intuition with the notion developed by other intuitionists, but it takes this intuitionism to imply non-derivability of moral obligations from non-moral premises or non-derivation of 'ought' from 'is', or values from facts.[27]

1.4 Naturalistic fallacy– 'Is-ought' fallacy: A Conspicuous Distinction

Drawing an inference from the following sections, in this last section of the paper I argue that the conflation of Moore's Naturalistic fallacy with Hume's fallacy of derivation of 'ought' from 'is' is the direct consequence of three oversights – I. Semantic reading of Naturalistic

fallacy, II. Misunderstanding the objective of Moore's Ontology, and III. Attribution of intuitionism to Hume and comparing it with Moore's idea of Intuition.

As mentioned in the previous section, according to Moore's open-question argument, there cannot be any attempted definition of good, for neither of these attempted definitions is both analytic as well as informative. However, lest one gets carried away with the semantic reading of the argument, it needs to be noted that Moore is emphatic in his insistence that he is referring to the ontological definition of the predicate good, and such an ontological definition of good must be distinguished from its "verbal definition", which is a provisional definition that one may bestow upon a word. For Moore, "verbal definition proper" is what words mean in terms of their usage amongst its users. These distinctions that Moore seeks to affirm between the ontological definition of the term 'good' and other forms of verbal definitions is suggestive of the fact that, for Moore, the task of defining the term 'good' is not at all, in its primary stance, a question of semantics but is rather a question of discerning the ontological nature of good. It is Moore's ontology that informs his semantics and not vice versa.[28]

Unlike what semantic reading of Moore presupposes, I argue that Moore does not want to establish simple and unanalyzable nature of good by providing open-question argument but rather in Moore's opinion, open-question argument merely *confirms or corroborates* the fact that good is a simple, unanalyzable ontological predicate, for has it not been simple or had it been complex then it would have been analyzable and definable, thereby identifiable with natural properties. Good, thus, must be invariably understood as 'good' *in* 'itself', and therefore, in its primordial sense, the term 'good' *refers to* precisely this *singular* and unique property of good whose definition, within the demands of analyticity of a definition, can be satisfied only self-referentially. Thus, I argue that Moore's opposition to the possible definition of good was not intended to oppose the non-derivability of value from fact although it certainly intended to achieve autonomy of good and thereby autonomy of ethics. Admittedly, it may seem unfathomable to uphold both, the claim of non-derivability of values from facts, and the claim of autonomy of ethics but I argue that the holistic understanding of Moore would enable one to appreciate Moore's arguments and efforts in doing so.

I urge here that one should not merely focus on Moore's open-question argument and its role in the formulation of Naturalistic fallacy but should rather look beyond it and attempt to grasp Moore's purpose underlying his theoretical commitments. I contend that had

Moore's objective behind proposing an open-question argument and Naturalistic fallacy been to distinguish facts from values, as semantic readers of Moore suppose, then he would not have taken recourse to Utilitarianism as his first-order theory of ethics.[29]

I observe that Moore's opposition to ethical naturalism, therefore, unlike that of Hume's is not for its assertion of moral realism by deriving values from facts but it is rather for their reduction of values to natural facts. To put it differently, I submit that Moore's primary discontent with all naturalistic theories of ethics was not that they located the property of good in the real world, but his discomfort was that in their positioning of good as real they ended up identifying it with natural properties or properties other than itself. In other words, Moore's unique disagreement with Ethical naturalism is more about *how they assert* their ontological position than *what they assert* ontologically, which is to say that Moore's principal problem with ethical naturalism, is about the *mode* in which they establish their moral realism. Moore's dictate on his non-naturalism undeniably goes well along with this claim of mine because it is Moore's non-naturalism that enables him to achieve moral realism without being an Ethical naturalist. In fact, even his latest work, the second incomplete preface that Moore aspired to append to the second proposed edition of *Principia Ethica* speaks a similar language.[30]

Although there are scholars who to some extent grant credit to Moore by acknowledging his intent in arguing for an ontological position rather than a semantic one, I, nonetheless, contend that one needs to proceed further and inspect beyond this to be able to discern Moore's Naturalistic fallacy from 'is-ought' fallacy.[31] I hypothesize that Moore's tenacious insistence on the ontological position of non-naturalism along with his rejection of ethical naturalism can only be consistently made sense provided one conjectures, that his real resistance against any definition of good followed by his avowal of non-naturalism perhaps was not as much against the ontological act of identification of non-natural property of good with any other natural property as it was against the very consequence of such an erroneous ontological identification. That is to say, I propose that more than obtaining an ontological position of non-naturalism, and thereby moral realism, Moore's Naturalistic fallacy was primarily intended to achieve discernment of moral beliefs from non-moral beliefs, and moral justification from non-moral justification which would not only vindicate the autonomy of ethics but would also open up a distinct space for moral truth and moral knowledge in Moore's Moral epistemology.[32]

Hence, through the Naturalistic fallacy, in my opinion, Moore is pointing out a *cognitive error* resulted in the form of the conflation of moral beliefs with non-moral beliefs and moral justification with non-moral justification. I presume that my interpretative stance is adequately justified by Moore's notion of faculty of intuition because unlike other intuitionists Moore does not construe the faculty of intuition as a justificatory mechanism conferring moral worth but he construes it as a faulty that cognizes the non-natural property of good, thereby giving rise to the formation of distinct moral beliefs.[33] Such an invocation of the faculty of intuition makes it explicit that Moore upholds cognitivism, according to which, there are moral beliefs, corresponding to moral facts, in a manner similar to non-moral beliefs that correspond to non-moral natural facts. Consequently, it entails that, for Moore, in contrast to Hume, morality is neither a matter of opinion, nor of taste, or of feeling, but is rather a matter of a justified belief, and therefore of a cognitive concern.[34] It is Moore's insistence on terming 'good' to be a non-natural property as an intrinsic constituent of a natural state of affairs that allows him to uphold that the domain of morality could never be the domain of taste, feeling, or emotion; it, rather, has to be the domain of fact, and of certainty and therefore, the domain that is accessible to reason.

Contrary to Moore, Hume's views on morality are firmly grounded in his rejection of the domain of morality as being rooted in the domain of human rationality. According to the *Treatise of Human Nature,* the scope of reason, as far as the domain of morality is concerned, is said to be "perfectly inert", and incapable of rendering any substantial contribution to the domain of morality.[35] Hume believes that the faculty of reason, "is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them."[36] In other words, Hume asserts that the faculty of reason is merely instrumental because, in itself, it does not provide or invent any purpose but merely serves as an instrument for fulfilling a purpose posited by passions. That is to say that since the faculty of reason, according to Hume, exclusively functions as a faculty of discovering the efficient means or instruments to achieve the ends projected by passions. This, therefore, entails that for Hume, the prerogative of the faculty of reason is not to address questions concerning the 'whatness of good' but merely the 'howness of materializing it'. For Hume, the faculty of reason is neither enabled to choose particular ends to pursue nor is it equipped to evaluate or assess ends; it can merely present the best possible means of achieving the posited ends, for the faculty of reason, according to

Hume, "discovers only relations [between ideas or between matters of facts]".[37] Describing this inefficacy of the faculty of reason in the domain of morality, Hume writes,

> Since, morals, therefore, have an influence on the actions and affections, it follows, that they cannot be derived from reason; and that because reason alone, as we have already proved, can never have any such influence. Morals excite passions, and produce or prevent actions. Reason of itself is utterly impotent in this particular. The rules of morality, therefore, are not conclusions of our reason.[38]

With such an instrumental picture of the faculty of reason at hand, Hume, instead of grounding moral judgments in beliefs, grounds them in the feeling of approval or disapproval of somebody's actions, in which case the action is "a matter of fact; but it is the object of feeling, not of reason".[39] Consequently, according to Hume, and in contradistinction with Moore, "morality is more properly felt than judged".[40] In other words, Hume believes that moral principle is not a principle derived from the faculty of reason but is rather a principle derived from *feeling*. It is, for Hume, thus derived from the emotional or affective aspect of an agent, rather than her rational or cognitive aspect. Regardless of how Hume justifies the origin of moral principle from feeling or emotion, what is important for us here is that, for him, moral principle, by virtue of emerging from emotion, has no direct relationship with the cognitive aspect of the human agent, and consequently, it cannot be attributed truth or falsity. Truth or falsity can only be attributed to that which, according to Hume, is "susceptible of agreement or disagreement either to real relations of ideas or to real existence and matter of fact".[41] Since morality is all about passions and actions which, instead of being copies of some other entities, are themselves "original facts and realities, complete in themselves," therefore, Hume contends that "it is impossible [that] they can be pronounced either true or false".[42] Thus it is quite evident that, for Hume, unlike Moore, there cannot be a legitimate notion of moral truth, for morality is never a matter of reason or cognition since it pertains to the realm of emotion. Consequently, Hume's moral epistemology, as opposed to Moore's moral epistemology, is an epistemology concerning emotions or, what he sometimes calls, 'sentiment'.[43]

Despite this stark variation in the philosophical underpinnings between Hume and Moore, it is of some import that though both Hume and Moore uphold a correspondence theory of truth, they nevertheless do not land up arguing for a similar variety of moral

realism.[44] However, as I have shown, it is Hume's move of situating morality solely within the non-cognitive aspect of affections in contrast to Moore, who situates it within the cognitive domain that separates their respective moral frameworks from each other. Given these differences, particularly with regards to the notion of moral truths, it is evident that one cannot claim both Moore and Hume to be making similar claims.

Hence, I argue that if Moore's opposition to the naturalization of the property of good, along with its formulation as a non-natural property, is clearly with the additional intent of securing a distinct space for moral cognition, and thereby for moral truths, then Hume, on the other hand, in his opposition to the derivation of 'ought' from 'is', is essentially denying the derivation of a moral principle from the rational aspect of an agent, thereby barring morality from the cognitive domain.

Since, for Hume, the cognitive domain is populated by beliefs corresponding to or describing facts, therefore, the cognitive domain is equitable with the domain of descriptions. Consequently, it follows for Hume that to allow the derivation of a moral principle from the cognitive aspect is an erroneous derivation of a prescription from descriptions.

In contrast, Moore's orientation is informed by the concern to carve out a peculiar niche for moral beliefs, and thereby for moral truth within the cognitive domain, particularly, given that any naturalized theory of ethics, by virtue of naturalization of 'good' preempts the possibility of there being qualitatively distinct domain for moral beliefs. Subsequently, unlike Hume, Moore's ontology does not advocate the situating of 'good' within the non-cognitive domain of emotions, but rather allows for the devising of a distinct category of existence for the property of good, by construing it to be a non-natural property, and thereby, making it ontologically distinct. Therefore, one can summarize that, for Moore, the moral statement about the good is an expression of an *agent-neutral cognitive content*, corresponding to an external state of affairs whereas, for Hume, it is an expression of *an agent-relative affective content,* which is itself a result of the invocation of some specific emotion in the concerned agent.

Following this discussion, it implies that, while Hume's opposition to the derivation of 'ought' from 'is' is reflective of his fundamental opposition to the allocation of the ground of moral judgment to the faculty of reason whereas, Moore's opposition to the naturalization of the property of good is primarily an opposition that is reflective of

his discomfort with the collapse of the distinction between moral and non-moral beliefs, and thus, the collapse of the distinction between moral and non-moral justifications. Consequently, I contend that though Hume's position reflects the intent to separate the domain of facts from that of values, or that of descriptive statements from evaluative ones, Moore's Naturalistic fallacy does not reflect any such distinction, for, unlike Hume, for Moore, the non-natural property of good is very much part of the *real* world. Thus, given Moore's distinctive ontology, one can derive an 'ought' from 'is'.

To put it differently, the fallacy of 'is-ought' does not merely exhibit Hume's commitment to the non-cognitive nature of the moral principle, but it also disparages the ethical naturalists' commitment to the cognitive nature of the moral principle. In contrast, Moore's Naturalistic fallacy does not disparage the ethical naturalists' commitment to the cognitive nature of the moral principle, but it rather condemns their way, or mode, of unfolding the entailments of that commitment.

Hence, it can be broadly concluded that Moore's conception of Naturalistic fallacy was an attempt to point out the possible ***cognitive error*** that ethical naturalist commits in her ethical framework whereas Hume's conception of the 'is-ought' fallacy was his attempt to showcase ethical naturalist's ***cognitive incompetency*** in single-handedly rendering any ethical principle.

Notes

1. Moore, George Edward. *Principia Ethica: with the Preface to the Second Edition and Other Papers.* 1903. Edited by Thomas Baldwin, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
2. Though Moore is cognizant of the fact that such a fallacy can be discerned, in what Moore calls 'metaphysical theories of ethics' as well, wherein good is identified in terms of some other metaphysical attributes, however, the dominant trend in the then prevalent ethical theories tends to identify `good' with natural objects, thereby committing the Naturalistic fallacy. (Moore, George Edward. *Principia Ethica: with the Preface to the Second Edition and Other Papers.* 1903. Edited by Thomas Baldwin, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, p. 91.)
3. Ibid., p. 62.
4. Hume, David. *A Treatise of Human Nature*, 1738. Edited by Selby-Bigge, L. A. 2nd ed. revised by P. H. Nidditch, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975
5. Ibid., p. 469.
6. See, Frankena, William. "The Naturalistic Fallacy." *Mind*, vol. 48, no. 192, 1939, pp. 464–477.
7. Whittaker, Thomas. *The Theory of Abstract Ethics.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1916, p. 19.

8. Ibid.
9. Ibid., p. 20.
10. Ibid., p. 50.
11. Williams, Donald C. "Ethics as Pure Postulate." *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. 42, no. 4, 1933, pp. 399-411.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid., p. 402.
14. For similar reading also see *The Nature of Abstract ethics* by Thomas Whittaker as mentioned by William Frankena in his paper 'The Naturalistic Fallacy'.
15. Searle, John."How to derive 'ought' from 'is'." *Philosophical Review,* vol. 73, no. 1, 1964, pp. 43-58.
16. Ibid., p. 55.
17. Ibid., p. 58.
18. Ball, Stephen W. "Reductionism in Ethics and Science: A Contemporary Look at G. E. Moore's Open Question Argument." *American Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. 23, no. 3, 1988, pp. 197–213. For similar reading see Brink, David O. *Moral Realism and Foundations of Ethics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989. p. 146.
19. Moore, George Edward. *Principia Ethica: with the Preface to the Second Edition and Other Papers*. 1903. Edited by Thomas Baldwin, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, p. 67.
20. Ibid., p. 68.
21. Ibid., p. 89
22. Caj Strandberg in his 'In Defense of the Open Question Argument' (2004), argues that broadly there are three stages of different readings of Moore's Open Question Argument following the publication of *PE*. The first stage of the reading of Moore's OQA was the discourse initiated by William Frankena's paper 'The Naturalistic Fallacy' published in 1939 which was subsequently followed by the second stage of the reading of Moore at the hands of R. G. Durant (1970), Gilbert Harman (1977) and Hilary Putnam (1981) who criticized Moore for reducing naturalism to analytic definitional thesis. Further, the third stage of the reading of Moore is credited to Stephen W. Ball's paper 'Reductionism in Ethics and Science: A Contemporary look at G.E. Moore's Open Question Argument' (1988), also See Pigden, Charles, "Naturalism." *A Companion to Ethics*, edited by Peter Singer. New Jersey: Blackwell publishers, 1991, pp. 421-431.
23. Gibbard, Allan. "Normative Properties." *Metaethics After Moore*, edited by Terry Horgan and Mark Timmons, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006, p. 319. Similar point is made by Gilbert Harman in his text *The Nature of Morality*.
24. Regan, Donald."How to be Moorean."*Ethics*, Vol. 113, No. 3, 2003, p. 652.
25. Drawing the basic insight from Kripke, Putnam points out that Moore, by exhibiting the implausibility of analytic definition of the term 'good', seeks to establish an invariable relation between the *metaphysical necessity* of the nature of an entity referred to by the term 'good', on the one hand, and a *priori cognizability* of the nature of such an entity, on the other. In other words, according to Putnam, for Moore, the definition could only be analytic for metaphysical necessity could only be cognized in an a priori manner. Putnam challenges this position of Moore by revealing the possibility of a synthetic definition, which is entailed by the claim that *analyticity* and *necessity* are two distinct notions, for metaphysically necessary nature of an entity need not necessarily be known a

priori, and could very well be known in a posteriori manner. Putnam, Hilary. *Reason, Truth and History.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981, p. 207.

26. As mentioned by William Frankena, Scholars like J. Laird and Whittaker uphold such a position. See, Frankena, William. "The Naturalistic Fallacy." *Mind*, vol. 48, no. 192, 1939, pp. 464–477. Also see Huemer, Michael. *Ethical Intuitionism.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, p. 74.
27. Moreover, such a reading is also made possible by Moore's discussion on J. S. Mill's Utilitarianism. Moore opposes the definition of good provided by Utilitarianism in terms of pleasure. Questioning the definition, Moore claims that the open nature of the question 'is pleasure really good?' establishes that both these terms, namely 'pleasure' and 'good', refer to two ontologically distinct entities. It is precisely this assertion of Moore, in my opinion, was appropriated by semantic reading to establish the between 'pleasure' as a 'linguistically descriptive fact' and 'good' as a 'non-descriptive evaluative value', reflective of the distinction between descriptive statements and evaluative statements. That is to say that the unbridgeable gap between the definiendum 'good' and the definiens 'pleasure', or any other natural property or a natural state of affairs that Moore seeks to establish was, within semantic reading, erroneously held to be mirroring the unbridgeable gap between the realm of facts and the realm of values, or between that of evaluation and description.
28. Such a stance pertaining to the nature of good as being indefinable is in stark contrast with, for instance, both Russell's notion of indefinability of good, and Wittgenstein's notion of the same. For Russell, the responsibility for the failure to define 'good' lies squarely in the available structures of definition. Russell argues that the very fact that there are various incompatible definitions of 'good', unlike that of the definition of, say the term 'pentagon', establishes the fact that none of the purported definitions of 'good' are real definitions but, rather, they are affirmations about the things that are good. See Russell, Bertrand. "The Elements of Ethics", *Philosophical Essays*, London: Routledge, 1910. For Wittgenstein as well the failure to define 'good' is by virtue of the limits of the structure of language. Ludwig Wittgenstein argues that the structure of our language permits us to talk meaningfully only about the contingent entities. Since the ontological nature of good is necessary in itself, therefore, according to Wittgenstein, we cannot speak about it meaningfully. Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Tractatus Logico Philosophicus*, translated by C. K. Ogden, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul. 1922 (6.41, 6.42, 6.421).
29. Moore, George Edward.*Ethics*, London: Williams and Norgate Printing Press, 1912, p. 31.
30. Moore, George Edward. *Principia Ethica: with the Preface to the Second Edition and Other Papers.* 1903. Edited by Thomas Baldwin, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
31. For scholars acknowledging Moore's insistence on ontological position of non-naturalism see Baldwin, Thomas. *G. E. Moore (The Arguments Of The Philosophers).* London: Routledge Press, 1990., Regan, Tom. *Bloomsbury's Prophet: G. E. Moore and the Development of His Moral Philosophy.* 1986, Reprinted by Eugene: Wipf & Stock Publications, 2012, Shafer-Landau, Russ.*Moral Realism: A Defense*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003, Brink, David O. *Moral Realism and Foundations of Ethics.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.
32. There is a line of thought according to which such division between moral justification and non-moral justification can never be upheld for all beliefs

regardless of their subject matter are considered to be epistemic in nature. That is to say, as per this line of thought, beliefs, by their very nature, are epistemic and therefore justification pertaining to any belief, regardless of which facts constitute the concerned justification, the justification is invariably termed as an non-moral justification. Hence, within such an interpretative paradigm, there is only one single monolithic justificatory process in which all justifications are exclusively epistemic. Nevertheless, any such possibility of terming all justifications as epistemic is not being explored here primarily because Moore himself does not seem to be very keen to venture into any such direction during the course of his investigation. Moore does not seem to uphold that all beliefs, by definition, are epistemic in nature.

33. In *PE*, Moore distinctly dissociates himself from other intuitionists. He argues that the essence of Intuitionism is to suppose that rules of action - statements not of what ought to *be*, but of what we ought to do - are intuitively certain, whereas in his intuitionism statements of what ought to be are intuitively certain. An implication of this, of course, is this that the faculty of intuition, for Moore, unlike other intuitionists such as Richard Price, Samuel Clark is not a faculty that justifies moral actions, but it is a faculty that cognizes non-natural property of good. (Moore, George Edward. *Principia Ethica: with the Preface to the Second Edition and Other Papers*. 1903. Edited by Thomas Baldwin, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, p. 198)
34. Ibid., p. 281.
35. Hume, David. *A Treatise of Human Nature*, 1738. Edited by L. A. Selby-Bigge, 2nd ed. revised by P. H. Nidditch, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975, p. 415.
36. Ibid., p. 413.
37. Ibid., p. 468.
38. Ibid., p. 459.
39. Ibid., p. 477.
40. Ibid., p. 479.
41. Ibid., p. 464.
42. Ibid. However, Hume here does not mean that the faculty of reason does not have any relationship whatsoever with human actions. In fact, Hume argues that the faculty of reason is related to an action in two distinct ways. Firstly, the faculty of reason might excite a particular passion which might lead an agent to act, and secondly, the faculty of reason might provide us the best instrument, in order to perform certain actions in the process of fulfilling certain passion.
43. One may, nevertheless, argue that given this sentimentalist position of Hume, there cannot be a moral epistemology in Hume but merely, what one may broadly call a variety of moral psychology. The question as to whether to call it epistemology or psychology is a larger question, and hence, demands altogether different treatment which I don't intend to undertake here.
44. When I claim here that given their agreement on the correspondence theory of truth, both Moore and Hume could have argued for moral realism, I already allow the possibility of Hume being called a moral realist. Following this, I seek to clarify that Hume may not be called a moral realist, if at all I call him so, in the same sense in which Moore is termed to be a moral realist. The sense in which Moore is termed to be moral realist conceives 'real' as a 'mind-independent' category. If Hume is a non-cognitivist or a sentimentalist, then he cannot certainly be realist in this mind-independent sense of the term 'real'. Hume can be termed realist, provided the term 'real' is understood to mean

as non-fictitious or non-imaginary, and thereby not constructed. Approbation or sentiments may not be real in the mind-independent sense, but they are certainly real in the sense that they are not imaginary or fictitious, and thereby constructed.

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