

The Ups and Downs of Searle's Deriving "Ought" from "Is" With A Suggestion

Searle'ün Olgudan Ahlaki Yargı Elde Etmek Çalışmasının Artı ve Eksi Yönleri ve Bir Çözüm Önerisi

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Received: 07.11.2024 | Accepted: 25.03.2025

Abstract: This study aims to observe Searle's How to Derive Ought From Is (1964). Starting with David Hume, there is a tradition that defends the idea that it is impossible to derive ought from is or, values from facts. Searle, however, claims that he suggests a new way to assess the matter, through which he believes he can solve the problem. Here, I analyze Searle's suggestion, for which I hold several objections. Along with the objections I hold, I suggest a new perspective by referring to the Background, which belongs to Searle but whose origin lies in the philosophy of philosophers such as Bourdieu. I believe that by applying the Background, the derivation becomes possible for both institutional and brute facts. Furthermore, I believe that as copulas, auxiliaries, and main verbs belong to the same group, any kind of transition among them is not mysterious.

Keywords: Is, ought, facts, moral statements, evaluative statements.



The Roots of the Problem and Searle's Solution

In his *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739), David Hume tells us that what he has observed in every system of morality is that they start with certain statements which contain the copulas *is/is not*, then follow with statements *ought/ought not*. Then, he states that he does not quite understand how this process occurs. Even though he is well aware of the philosophical importance of this point, he prefers to leave it to its readers (Hume, 1888: 469-470). Whatever the case is, without doubt, he creates a certain effect on the upcoming intellectual debates after himself.

However, as history has proven, it is difficult to end up with only one and a certain assumption by interpreting the point that Hume stresses. Due to the difficulty of arriving at such a precise assumption, historically speaking, there have been several interpretations on this subject matter, of which I will mention only three superficially. The first and the most important interpretation, without doubt, has been the one with the claim that due to the *naturalistic fallacy*, it is impossible to derive ought from is. That is, *no ethical or evaluative conclusion may be validly inferred from any set of purely factual premises*. The second interpretation is the claim that moral judgments are neither stating facts nor are truth-evaluable, which is to say that Hume has already established non-cognitivism by having already used the famous argument about the motivational influence of morals. Thus, with this, Hume has committed to the non-cognitivist or non-propositional view of moral judgments. Because of this fact, the paragraph related to is/ought must be a trivial consequence that happens to take place. In other words, non-cognitivism holds that moral evaluations are without propositional content and solely express feelings, so inferring them from propositional premises is impossible. The third interpretation holds the claim that *Hume's extensive argument that moral properties are not discernible by demonstrative reason leaves open the question of whether ethical evaluations may be conclusions of cogent probable arguments* (Cohon, 2018). I will stick with the first interpretation in this study, as Searle himself does. Now, let us see the solution Searle brings forward.

Searle begins his article with a general introduction to the problem. Then, he proceeds with the claim that he demonstrates a counterexample to this problem. He is well aware of the fact that with only one



counterexample, it is not possible to refute a tradition (a philosophical thesis, as he himself puts it); however, he believes that he introduces a general theory that not only supports the counterexample but also generates more counterexamples in the same sense that eventually fortifies his stance. For this matter at hand, Searle believes that a counterexample must be purely factual or descriptive for the sake of the argument so that he can show how it can be demonstrated to be evaluative (Searle, 1964: 43-44). He continues with the following statements in the numerical order:

(1) Jones uttered the words, "I hereby promise to pay you, Smith, five dollars."

(2) Jones promised to pay Smith five dollars.

(3) Jones placed himself under (undertook) 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. (Searle, 1964: 44).

Searle tries to draw the readers' attention to the fact that, while he is forming the relationship between any of these statements and their successors, some additional statements are deployed to show how one entails the other¹. That is because their relation is not simply in a contingent fashion, but there is also no *prima facie* entailment in each case observable. However, Searle claims that any additional statement made to show how one statement entails the other need not involve any evaluative statements or moral principles² (Searle, 1964: 44).

After explaining how it is possible to derive ought from is through the process of promising, Searle then tries to give the details of the theory that he believes is working behind the counterexample of promises. He claims that the theory, thanks to which the promises work, can be extended to every other situation in which there is a derivation of the kind mentioned. To him, it is only thanks to this theory that we can get ought from is both in the counterexample of promising and every other. The theory he

¹ Also to see how Austin assesses the matter of entailment in the case of *promise* and *ought to* and his idea of total speech act which I believe is parallel to Searle's theory of institutional facts (Searle's theory of institutional facts is of course much more detailed) see *How To Do Things With Words* (1962) Lecture IV.

². For the whole process that Searle applies to these five statements, see his article *How to Derive "Ought" From "Is."* (1964) Pp: 44-47.



mentions is the theory of institutional facts, which he also mentions in his subsequent works, such as 1995 and 2010.

Before getting into details of the theory of institutional facts and before telling us exactly how institutional facts can render us a way through which it is possible to derive ought from is, Searle feels the necessity to give a brief summary of what is generally going on in the traditional explication of the “is/ought” problem. In addition to showing us the challenges the problem harbors, he wants to demonstrate that how institutional facts theory can really solve the problem. In this sense, Searle tells us that the distinction between descriptive and evaluative statements is based on a very *rigid distinction*. This distinction, naturally, leads to such questions as *i)* As descriptive statements have the only end to explain the objective facts out there, and as evaluative statements, on the other hand, have the end to give information that is accepted as subjective, then how is it possible to make a subjective inference from an objective fact?, or *ii)* Is there any concealed process between the two kinds of statements that makes the process invisible to us? Searle believes that any answer given by the tradition to such questions ultimately turns out to be in the kind that: As descriptive statements have a radically different working mechanism than those deemed as evaluative, the logical gulf between the two different kinds of statements must truly exist and the derivation of the kind is not possible (Searle, 1964: 52-53).

Searle believes that the general problem of such kind of an explication of the is/ought problem is that it lacks giving us an exact and useful answer for, or a coherent account of such terms as obligation, commitment, and responsibility. Searle tells us that the traditional approach tries to give an account of such statements as: “My car goes eighty miles an hour.”, “Jones is six feet tall.”, “Smith has brown hair.” etc., while it is also forced to such utterances as: “Jackson has five dollars.”, “Jones got married.”, and “Brown hit a home run.” etc., which, to Searle, leads to the claim that the tradition fails to account for different kinds of descriptive statements (Searle, 1964: 54).

Searle, at this crossroads, steers the wheels in another direction by stating that the second group of descriptive statements is different than the usual descriptive statements, although both groups are deemed as



objective. Searle claims they are two distinct groups of descriptive statements in that the second group presupposes certain institutions, while the first does not. It is this distinction, according to Searle, that the tradition fails to see. Beginning to give hints of his own solution, Searle claims that this distinction rests yet on another distinction, namely the distinction between brute and institutional facts. Searle leans on the examples he gives in his article to give a clear picture of the difference between brute and institutional facts. Thus, he tells us that when the institution of money, which is an institutional fact, is taken back, all Jackson has is a bit of paper with green ink in the form of a rectangular, and that is a brute fact.

Similarly, when the institution of baseball, which is an institutional fact, is taken back, all a man does is hit a sphere with a stick, and again, that is also a brute fact. According to Searle, the underlying principles that distinguish these two kinds of statements are regulative and constitutive rules. In this sense, regulative rules are the ones that are applied to antecedent facts, and thus, they regulate antecedently existing forms of behavior, while constitutive rules not only regulate but also define new forms of behavior, which is to say they define the activity itself. For example, chess, when its mode of activity is concerned, takes place in accordance with constitutive rules, which means that without these rules, there is no chess as a game. To Searle, along with chess, the institutions he mentions are systems based on constitutive rules. In this respect, the second group of descriptive statements belong to institutional facts, which the tradition cannot discern from the first group. At this point, Searle chooses to focus on the second group of statements, namely the statements of institutional facts (Searle, 1964: 54-55).

Searle believes it is not hard to see that notions such as rights, obligations, and commitments are essentially institutionalized when we begin to understand institutional facts. To Searle, in the case of promise that he refers to at the beginning of his article, the whole proof is strictly related to the constitutive rule that promising is undertaking an obligation. Searle tells us that he starts with the brute fact that the man utters certain words, and inner to the institutional fact itself, the institution that is invoked renders us an "ought" from an "is" in the form of *the man ought to pay another man five dollars* (Searle, 1964: 56). Similarly, what is in play in the case of



“One ought not to steal.” is a constitutive rule that invokes the institution of private property. What is in play in the case of “One ought not to tell lies.” is a constitutive rule that invokes the institution of placing one under the obligation to speak honestly and truthfully. What is in play in the case of “One ought to pay one’s debts.” is a constitutive rule that invokes the institution of committing one to pay the debt as an obligation. In all these examples, essentially, what is done is the process of deriving ought from is. Then, to Searle, it is ok to say that commitments, rights, obligations, and responsibilities, rather than being matters of brute facts, are matters of institutional facts. With the proof of how institutional facts can render us the ability to derive ought from is, it becomes crystal clear how an indefinite number of other cases also can be generated within this theory (Searle, 1964: 56-57).

To conclude his article, Searle then tells us that he has proved that the term “promise” is evaluative and yet purely descriptive, and on the grounds of this fact, the so-called distinction considered by the tradition should be re-examined. Historically, the distinction between two groups of speech acts, the ones deemed as descriptive and the ones deemed as evaluative, have different illocutionary forces and they have been confused with the distinction between the statements which are based on objective facts and the statements which are not based on objective facts, but on facts that are matters of personal decision or opinion. To Searle, the first distinction has been taken as a special case of the latter, which leads to the claim that a statement with the illocutionary force of an evaluation cannot involve factual premises. However, Searle has the claim that he finds such an approach wrong, and he believes that *factual premises can entail evaluative conclusions*.³ (Searle, 1964: 58).

So far, I have tried to summarize Searle’s article on the possibility of deriving ought from is. I believe he has proved to us how a derivation of the kind is possible (at least for institutional facts). Now, let us see what it lacks.

³ Also see Searle’s *Rationality in Action* (2001) in which he tackles with the same issues.



Lacking Points and A Suggestion

I hold two criticisms about how Searle deploys the term 'evaluative'. First, I believe, because he focuses on the group of evaluative statements which are institutional facts so blindly, he leaves out non-institutional facts or statements, "brute facts" in this article. I believe that not every evaluative statement has to have strings with institutional facts and that is what I try to show in the following lines. But first let us reexamine the distinction between descriptive and evaluative statements from a different perspective.

Descriptive statements can be in the form of: "What we inhale is oxygen", "This is fire", or "It is winter". As can be seen, there is an "is" in all the examples I have given. Then, the question is: Do we necessarily need to use an "is" so that a statement can be descriptive? Apparently not, as Searle himself also accepts, a descriptive statement does not need to necessarily contain a copula. For example, the statements "My car goes eighty miles an hour" and "Smith has brown hair" "*Fire burns*" "*Bear kills*", etc. are also descriptive (Searle, 1964: 43). So then, what does such a characterization give us? It basically tells us that descriptive statements do not only contain "to be (am, is, are)" but they also contain verbs such as "go" "have" "burn" and "kill". I believe this is the point where the real problem begins. Once it is accepted that what is described can be described with "is" and verbs such as *go*, *kill*, and *burn*, the line between the descriptive and evaluative statements begins to blur. To open up this point a bit further, by returning to the examples I gave that necessarily contain an "is", what do we actually say when we utter the statement "This is fire"? Does the description end when this statement is uttered? I believe not. When the hearer hears and understands the statement, he/she gets also the following: "Fire burns" "Fire helps with cooking", "Fire heats or warms us"⁶ etc. Realize that for each of these statements, the context may change, but what does not change is that one cannot understand what fire is if you take all these facts about fire out of the equation. Similarly, in the example of

⁴ Italic is mine.

⁵ Italic is mine.

⁶ I believe Searle's ideas on how prelinguistic intentionality leads human beings to acquire language might be helpful for a better understanding of the present study. See chapter 4th of Making the Social World (2010).



“That is a bear”, the description does not end with just this statement in which there is an “is”, it is in fact followed with such statements as: “Bear walks”, “Bear eats” “Bear gives birth to babies”, and “Bear roars”, etc. As stated above, the line between the descriptive and evaluative statements gets blurry because it is a matter of fact to accept that the description of anything in which there is an “is” necessarily includes some actual verbs for further descriptive purposes. I believe this brings us to the point where we start to think about the true nature of “is”. We need to go over this point because copulas somewhat imply that what is mentioned is a fact and facts are static, unchangeable, and fixed. But are they really?

Any standard grammar textbook defines verb *to be* both as an auxiliary verb and as a main verb. As an auxiliary verb, *to be* helps us to form continuous tenses and passives. *To be*, when taken as an auxiliary, is a helping verb. As a main verb, however, verb *to be* has several meanings, the most important of which for the present study is that it is used to talk about permanent or temporary states⁷. States here refer to the states of being. As states of being change unquestionably and inevitably, it does not seem quite correct or logical to define and accept the description of facts as static, fixed, or unchangeable. In the example that “He is a man,” the word “is” is used as a main verb, and yes, it defines a state of being. A state of being of such can be accepted as a static one at first. However, it can be seen that the mentioned state is not static when observed closely. Before anyone could use the statement “He is a man.”, they must have also used the following statements for the same person: “He is a baby.” “He is a child.”, “He is a student.”, “He is an adolescent”, etc. All these examples have two basic *prima facie* indications: *i)* The states of being are in a kind of a shift of change, and *ii)* Their descriptions do not end with just a statement that contains a copula. Rather, the statement of description of, for example, “He is a student.” has to be further described with such statements as: “He goes to school.” “He learns.” “He likes math.”, etc. That is to say, although copulas seem to define unchangeable, static states, they, in fact, define changing states of being, which shows us that copulas are as

⁷ For further information see: https://dictionary.cambridge.org/grammar/british-grammar/be#be_15



action-based as any other main verb in English. Now, let us have a look at the function of auxiliary verbs.

In English, there are three main auxiliary verbs: *to be*, *do*, and *have*. Even though the number can be extended further when modal auxiliaries such as *can*, *could*, etc. are added to the list, they are all regarded as helping verbs (Aarts, 2011: 180). Although it cannot be said that this is the case for every auxiliary verb yet, it is accepted that the origins of some auxiliary verbs can be traced back to motion and posture main verbs such as in English *going-to* for future⁸ (Seiss, 2009: 506). This claim leaves the door open for the possibility that every one of the auxiliary verbs might have their origins in the main verbs (I strongly believe this is the case). Auxiliary verbs help to express tense, mood, and voice, while modal auxiliary verbs help to transform the sentences into some other by adding implications such as suggestion, obligation, ability, possibility, etc. But what is the most basic trait common to both auxiliary and modal verbs? The answer goes as such: Modal auxiliary and auxiliary verbs are deployed with a main verb to express moods, and a verb's grammatical mood shows us the intention of a statement (Butterfield, 2015: 680). The intention of a statement is then what Austin calls the illocutionary force⁹ (Austin, 1962: 99), and what Searle calls the illocutionary point (Searle, 1998: 147-148).

⁸ See *Syntactic Change: A Minimalist Approach to Grammaticalization* (2003) by Roberts and Roussou for a discussion of *light verbs* and how they have possibly been the source for modal auxiliary verbs.

⁹ To prove that there is not such a rigid distinction between constatives (descriptions) and performatives as generally broadcasted, Austin, as a first step, resorts to grammar to find a tool so that he can meet the gulf between the two. After a futile endeavor in grammar, which does not offer him a tool, he searches for another tool. He ends up with the claim that both constatives and performatives have illocutionary forces, which leads to the idea that both the alleged constatives and performatives become either felicitous/infelicitous or true/false in terms of their illocutionary forces, which take place in what he calls the total speech act. I, on the other hand, by accepting his thesis of illocutionary force, believe that the matter has a solution that is grammatical as well which harbors the claim that whether it is a copula, an auxiliary, or not, they all belong to the same family, that they are all verbs. Thus, they are all action-based. This leads to the idea that any transition between these allegedly existing two groups is no mystery. For discussions, see *How To Do Things With Words* (1962).



Where has this argument, so far, brought us to? Any answer to this question has at least two aspects. First, even though the functions can change, not only copulas but also auxiliary verbs are as much verbs as main verbs are. Second, we have come to the point that not only evaluative statements but also descriptive statements have intentions (illocutionary points, to put it better) in them, whether direct or indirect. None of these illocutionary points is isolated; rather, they work in what Austin calls *the total speech act*.

If all the elements in the equation are already verbs and they are, in fact, representing actions with their illocutionary points, the transition from one to another must not be that difficult, unlike what the tradition claims. The rigid line the tradition builds between the descriptive and evaluative statements is not real, and the gulf created between them is an illusion. It reminds me of the gulf between Descartes's two substances. On the one side, there is *the soul*, which is a different substance, and on the other, there is *a body*, which is totally another substance, both of which coexist in the same place. Just as the difficulty with this thesis is to build a bridge between these two, it is also a huge difficulty to build a bridge between descriptive and evaluative statements in the sense that tradition handles it. Because it is generally accepted that descriptive statements are about facts and evaluative statements, which, rather than being facts, are about values. If these two groups, namely facts and values, are to be taken as two distinct groups of entities, then the logical gulf between them stands. However, Searle proves the case to be otherwise for evaluative statements with his theory of institutional facts. Similarly, I believe that Searle's theory of is/ought is correct but lacks something crucial and that there is another way of assessing the case. Let us continue how.

Let us consider a case in light of Searle's claim. According to Searle, there are two kinds of facts: brute facts and institutional facts. Brute facts such as water and stones are ontologically objective, and they do not owe their existence to human beings who are observers. That is why their existence is observer-independent. Conversely, Institutional facts are ontologically subjective, which means if there are no humans, there is no way of talking about schools, marriages, money, etc. However, even though



institutional facts are ontologically subjective, as they are accepted by more than one person, they are epistemically objective.

In light of this information, now I will analyze a situation in which there is a brute fact. The example I give aims to demonstrate that *deriving ought from is* is as much possible for brute facts¹⁰ as it is possible for institutional facts. Then, the claim I keep is that why deriving ought from is for institutional facts creates such debates on the nature of such derivations, while deriving ought from is for brute facts, even though it is possible, as I try to show below, is bypassed, and not considered important at all? In line with this example, I try to show that there is, in fact, no mystery in the derivation of the kind as generally broadcasted.

The example of deriving ought from is for brute facts:

- i) This is fire.
- ii) Fire heats.
- iii) Fire burns.
- iv) Fire boils water, etc.

All these four sentences (the list can be extended) are needed so that anyone can have a clear conception of fire. This is to say, once again, describing anything with only a copula might seem enough, but it is not because the description is followed by some other statements. However, this process is somehow concealed from us. It is concealed in the fashion that not every information about the description made is constantly active in the consciousness. They are somehow qualities attached to it, and they lay there unconsciously, but they are always there and ready for grabbing, and they have the potential to be drawn into the realm of consciousness. Even when one talks about fire, everyone around the speaker, including himself, also knows that fire burns. Thus, when a woman, to warn her son, shouts, "There is a snake.", the meaning does not end only with this statement. Because in no sense does the description end there. The description

¹⁰ In his *Speech Acts* (1970), Searle seems to accept that it is possible to derive values from brute facts as well. However, all he does is say that such a derivation is possible without giving any proper examples except that there is a kind of commitment both in a 'promise' and in a 'triangle'. Just as one commits himself to an obligation when he promises, he commits himself to the fact that triangles have three sides when he says, 'X is a triangle'. On the face of this information, it is important to note that what Searle says does not entail what I claim in this article.



continues with the following information or statements: “Snakes bite.” “Snakes poison.”. These statements of description, then, cause some other statements that necessarily contain an “ought to/ought not to” such as “I ought to run.” “I ought not to get closer to the snake”, etc. Now, could anyone really claim that these two statements containing an “ought” which is a derivation from an “is,” are evaluative in Searlean sense or moral in Humean sense and that their derivation is impossible? I think not. None of these statements are evaluative or moral, and the derivation is possible for two reasons: *i)* Along with copulas, both “ought” and the main verbs, such as “bite, poison” are all verbs, and they are of the same group which means the transition between them is not the transition between two distinct groups and due to this it does not create any problem. *ii)* All these processes occur regarding what Searle calls the Network and the Background. These two entail both the cases where the derivation of an “ought” from an “is” is not necessarily moral and the cases where the derivation of an “ought” from an “is” is necessarily moral/evaluative. That is, they contain both the cases of brute facts and the cases of institutional facts.

To Searle, the Background is a set of abilities or presuppositions one has, which is to say, it is the “know-how” one has while tackling anything in the world. For example, if one wants to fly to Los Angeles, first of all, he should have certain abilities for mental content such as Los Angeles is a city, geographically it is very difficult to walk there, going by plane is a choice available among other transportation methods, planes do not crawl but fly, flying by plane necessitates him/her to have a passport and buy tickets, buying tickets necessitates him/her to spend money (TL, or USD), Türkiye and the USA are two distinct countries, etc. The Network, on the other hand, is the claim that all these abilities and presuppositions are in some sort of relation, that they are not isolated units (Searle, 2010: 31). Searle, then, divides the Background into two, namely the deep and not deep Backgrounds. The deep Background contains such dispositions as walking on two legs, eating, drinking, inhaling oxygen, etc. while the Background that is not deep contains such abilities and dispositions as driving a car, using TL as a means of exchange in Türkiye, etc. The elements in the deep Background are common to every human being, while the elements in the other can vary from culture to culture (Searle, 1998: 109). With such



a classification, it is easy to conclude that the deep Background contains elements that are mostly qualities that brute facts have, while the other Background has institutional facts. In other words, one can say that the notion of the Background is a roof notion that contains both brute facts and institutional facts.

For brute facts, then, the Background gives some abilities, dispositions, and know-how mental states to human beings in general. Going back to the example of deriving an "ought" from an "is" for brute facts, what we have is a certain know-how that makes human beings act in certain ways rather than others. In the example, which consists of four statements, even the first statement, which contains the copula "is", is enough most of the time because when regarded in the Background, it necessarily contains the other three elements. That is why moving from a statement containing the copula "is" such as "This is fire." to the point where one has the mental content that he/she ought not to touch it is not a matter of hocus-pocus, but just a matter of the Background and the element of know-how. Additionally, the derivation of the kind is no mystery because, along with *to be*, *modal auxiliaries* and *main verbs* are in the same group in terms of being verbs. Similar to the fact that brute facts are descriptions of ontologically objective elements, institutional facts, although ontologically subjective, become facts when accepted and recognized. They become epistemically objective facts working in the Network that take place in the Background. Thus, they are facts that cannot only be described by one statement that contains a copula, but they are further described by other series of statements, which are generally their qualities and functions. That is to say, in terms of being facts, institutional facts work the same way as brute facts do. That is why just as it is not a mystery to derive ought from is for brute facts, it should not be a mystery to derive an ought from is for institutional facts. The only difference between the derivation of ought from is for brute facts, and the derivation of "ought" from "is" for institutional facts is a matter of an ontological and epistemic approach. That is, denial of any rules stemming from the institutional facts poses a threat to the institutional fact itself, which is observer-dependent, unlike fire, snakes, etc., and thus to the system of social reality or to the Background that the institutional reality is a part. The so-called asymmetry between brute facts and



institutional facts somewhat creates the illusion that it is impossible; however, if we can assess both brute facts and institutional facts in the system of the Network and the Background, the asymmetry is broken, and we see that they are parallel to each other. After all, according to Searle, we build institutional facts on brute facts via language. Hence, as much as deriving ought from is is not a mystery for brute facts, it is not a mystery to derive ought from is for institutional facts, either. Notice that, as it is in the examples of fire and snake, the sentences containing “ought” for brute facts are not moral, while the statements that contain an “ought” for institutional facts are counted as evaluative. The reason for that, in terms of brute facts, is to keep human beings unharmed, while in terms of institutional facts, it is solely to make the institutional facts get going further in time by keeping the contract secure.

As to the second criticism I hold for the term evaluative, it is not particularly clear in which sense Searle uses the term. One cannot understand exactly if Searle takes the term “evaluative” in the same sense as “moral”. Searle, later in his *Speech Acts* (1970), somehow sheds some doubt on it. He tells us that, roughly, he is not sure if the statement “Jones ought to pay Smith five dollars.” even though he believes it is evaluative¹¹, is moral or not. He has some serious doubts about it. This, on its own, leads to some ramifications. The first of which is that if he takes both terms as equals in terms of their meanings and usages, then his doubts on whether the statement “Jones ought to pay Smith five dollars.” is moral or not is baseless, leading to another repercussion. That is, as Searle’s remark that harbors his doubts continues to exist unless he changes it, then all his efforts are in vain. In other words, he ends up proving nothing when it is assessed within the scope of the problem as it stands in the tradition because he seems to give up. Second, if we are to take it that he believes that the above statement is evaluative but not moral, then again, what he has amounts to nothing in terms of the is/ought problem that has a long tradition, so to speak.

¹¹ Having gone through Searle’s 1964 article (How to Derive “Ought” From “Is”), one is inclined to think that Searle takes both evaluative and moral in the same sense until we come across his 1970 book (*Speech Acts-An Essay in The Philosophy of Language*), at the end of which he mentions the is/ought problem once again with some extra thought given. There, Searle explicitly takes the terms evaluative and moral as two distinct terms.



He begins his article by mentioning the problem and the tradition that has tried to deal with the matter; he believes that he has not only a counterexample but also a theory that supports the counterexample he offers and helps generate many more counterexamples. However, beginning an article with the end to prove that there might be a solution to the is/ought problem, which is strictly related to morality, and then ending up with an indecision on whether the counterexample he offers is moral or not somehow is the nullification of his all efforts, because it harbors incoherency at the very least. Better yet, if he does not hold both terms as synonyms, then moral statements must be a distinct group that exists independently of evaluative statements, and what Searle does is only to show us how it is possible to derive ought from is only for institutional facts that are evaluative without making any connection with moral statements. In all three cases, one can openheartedly claim that Searle is not even close to solving the problem.

Conclusion

I have mentioned the problem of deriving values from facts by mentioning the problem's origins and that there has been a tradition that defends the claim that *deriving an "ought" from an "is"* is impossible. After that, I give a summary of John R. Searle's article in which he proves how it is possible to derive ought from is by giving an example of "*promise*" which he backs up with his theory of institutional facts and through which he believes a number of different counterexamples can be produced.

Up until this point, I hold no objection against what Searle suggests with his theory of institutional facts and how we derive ought from is. In general, however, I have several objections. I think Searle's approach to the matter is lacking three important points. First, I believe Searle keeps the case of brute facts outside by only focusing on institutional facts. Second, I hold the criticism that Searle could have backed his theory with his notion of *the Background*, which would spare room both for brute facts and institutional facts because the Background contains elements of both brute facts and institutional facts. As one can say, by analyzing Searlean philosophy, institutional facts are extensions of brute facts on which they are built, so it is not that difficult to see the parallelism between brute facts and



institutional facts. This basically tells us that just as it is not a mystery to derive ought from is in the cases of brute facts, it is not a mystery to derive ought from is in the cases of institutional facts when they are all assessed in the Background theory of Searle. Third, I believe Searle's usage of the term "evaluative" is problematic.

I also claim that there is a grammatical solution that can be deployed to prove that there is, in fact, no gulf between descriptive and evaluative statements. Along with *to be*, both *auxiliaries* and *main verbs* belong to the same group, and they are all verbs, which indicates that the statements containing *to be*, *auxiliaries*, and *main verbs* are action-based. Accepting it this way meets the gulf between traditionally accepted two distinct groups, namely the facts, and values, and makes the transition between *to be* and *auxiliary verbs* not that much a matter of hocus-pocus. Unlike what is traditionally accepted, whether deemed as descriptive or evaluative, every statement, along with its illocutionary forces, belongs to the same group. They are all action-based, regardless of whether they contain copulas, auxiliaries, or main verbs. That is to say, there are not two groups of statements, such as descriptives and evaluatives; there are only action-based statements.

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Öz: Bu çalışmada John Searle'ün olgudan ahlaki yargı elde etme problemine yönelik sunduğu çözüm ele alınacaktır. David Hume ile başlayıp olgudan ahlaki yargı elde edilemeyeceğini iddia eden bir geleneğe karşı gelerek, var olan problem, Searle bir çözüm önerdiğinin kanısındadır. Bu çalışmada Searle'ün çözüm önerisi analiz edilip birkaç noktada eleştirilecektir. Bu eleştirilere ek olarak, kökeni itibarıyla Bourdieu gibi filozoflara dayanan Searle'ün Arkaplan kavramına göndermede bulunularak problemi çözdüğüne inanılan başka bir çözüm önerilmiştir. Bu bağlamda Arkaplan kavramı ile birlikte problemin hem kurumsal hem de ham olgular düzeyinde çözüldüğü iddia edilmiştir. Ayrıca; kopula, yardımcı fiil ve asıl fiiller aynı gruba ait olduklarından, aralarındaki herhangi bir geçişin çok da gizemli olmadığı iddia edilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: dır, -malı, olgular, ahlaki ifadeler, yargı bildiren ifadeler.



