THE GAP BETWEEN "IS" AND "SHOULD"

It has often been held that ethical statements cannot follow from premises consisting exclusively of statements of fact. Thus Karl Popper once said:

Perhaps the simplest and most important point about ethics is purely logical. I mean the impossibility to derive [sic] nontautological ethical rules—imperatives; principles of policy; aims; or however we may describe them—from statements of facts. Only if this fundamental logical position is realized can we begin to formulate the real problems of moral philosophy, and to appreciate their difficulty.\(^1\)

Popper would presumably wish to make a similar claim about all nonfactual statements: like many other philosophers, he believes that only statements of fact can follow from statements of fact. This is the contention that I wish to examine in what follows. I shall try to show that there is a good sense in which some statements about what should be done do follow from factual premises.

Contemporary writers, such as R. M. Hare\(^2\) and P. H. Nowell-Smith,\(^3\), who agree with Popper, usually quote a famous passage from Hume’s Treatise.\(^4\) Hume maintains that all the moralists he knows make an imperceptible transition from observations about human affairs or assertions about the existence of God, all expressed with “the usual copulations of propositions, is and is not,” to normative conclusions “connected with an ought or ought not.”

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2. Hare says: “Popper rightly refers to the rule as ‘perhaps the simplest and most important point about ethics’” (The Language of Morals [Oxford, 1952], p. 31). In Hare’s treatment, the autonomy principle takes the special form that no imperative conclusions can be validly drawn from premises that do not contain at least one imperative (p. 28).
3. Nowell-Smith says that an argument from factual premises to an ethical conclusion “must be illegitimate reasoning, since the conclusion of an argument can contain nothing which is not in the premises, and there are no ‘oughts’ in the premises” (Ethics [London, 1954], p. 37).
He says that this transition is "of the last consequence" and needs to be explained: "it is necessary . . . 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."

As a tribute to the remarkable influence this passage has exerted, I propose to assign to the principle that only factual statements can follow from exclusively factual statements the title "Hume's Guillotine." By "factual statements" here and throughout, I mean such as can be expressed by sentences whose copula is "is" or "is not" but cannot be expressed by sentences containing "should," "must," "ought," and so forth.

It is not clear whether Hume is intending to offer an argument or is merely insinuating skeptical doubts. Considered as argument, what he says is singularly unconvincing. He implies that it is fallacious reasoning to introduce into a conclusion "some new relation or affirmation," expressed by "ought" or "ought not," that is "entirely different" from the relations or affirmations occurring in the premises. The strength of his position depends upon the interpretation that is given to the expression "entirely different"; "ought" is different from "is," of course, but if Hume thought this was sufficient to disqualify the "ought"-conclusion, he himself was committing an error of reasoning. The sense of "entirely different" that Hume needs is one in which A counts as entirely different from B when and only when a statement containing A cannot be logically derived from premises containing A, but not B. Now whether "ought" is entirely different from "is" in this sense is the very question at issue. Hume, if taken to be offering an argument, is assuming what needs to be established, namely, that an "ought" can never be derived from an "is."

In his paper "Hume on 'Is' and 'Ought,'" Philosophical Review, LXVIII (1959), 451-468, A. C. MacIntyre argues against the customary interpretation of Hume's remarks. He contends that Hume was only raising a question about the derivation of an "ought" from an "is," which is subsequently answered affirmatively in Hume's own ethical theory. I side with MacIntyre's critics in holding this reading to be unsound in spite of its ingenuity. See R. F. Atkinson and M. J. Scott-Taggart in Philosophical Review, LXX (1961), 231-244; also Antony Flew and Geoffrey Hunter in Philosophy, XXXVIII (1963), 178-184.
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Why are modern readers predisposed to endorse Hume's Guillotine? One reason may be the widespread but mistaken view that no term may occur in the conclusion of a valid argument unless it occurs, or can be made to occur by suitable definitions, somewhere in the premises. If "valid argument" meant the same as "valid syllogism," the view would be correct—but it is easily shown not to be so in general. Consider, for instance, the following simple argument. A citizen is a person; therefore a married citizen is a married person. Here, the word "married" occurs for the first time in the conclusion, yet the argument is valid as it stands, without benefit of suppressed premises. One obstacle to the recognition of this elementary point is an unfortunate but popular metaphor of the conclusion being "contained" in the premises. But there is no useful sense in which the conclusion of a valid argument can be said to be "contained" in the premises; that is merely a misleading way of saying that the conclusion really does follow from the given premises, without the addition of supplementary assumptions.

It is in fact quite easy to show that some kinds of "ought"-statements, pace Hume, really do follow from "is"-premises. Consider, for instance, the following valid argument:

Vivisection causes gratuitous suffering to animals.
Nothing that causes gratuitous suffering ought to be done.
Therefore, vivisection ought not to be done.

From this argument, we can easily derive another valid argument proceeding from "is" to "ought":

Vivisection causes gratuitous suffering to animals.
Therefore, if nothing that causes gratuitous suffering ought to be done, vivisection ought not to be done.
And in general, "If A then B" entails "If B ought not to be done, A ought not to be done.".

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6 It is interesting to find G. E. Moore in his Commonplace Book (London, 1962) taking "p contains q" to mean that p is a conjunction having q as one of its conjuncts (p. 342). Upon this literal construction of the metaphor of "containing," it is not surprising that Moore speedily concludes that p can entail q without containing it.

Although this example may serve to discredit the dogma that an “ought” is never derivable from an “is,” I do not attach much importance to it and shall not rely upon it in my argument. For when “If B ought not to be done, A ought not to be done” is entailed by “If A then B,” the former statement will serve no useful purpose in an ethical argument. Our only reason for asserting it will be our knowledge of the truth of the factual statement “If A then B” from which we can derive any consequences that follow from the trivial ethical statement that it entails.8 (Contrast a nontrivial ethical hypothetical such as “If something ought to be done, one ought not to boast of having done it,” whose truth is not guaranteed by a corresponding factual hypothetical.) I shall say nothing more about cases in which the “ought”-conclusion is complex, because I want to discuss the more fundamental case in which the normative conclusion is free from sentential connectives.

A second reason that may predispose modern philosophers to accept Hume’s Guillotine is the view, more popular in our own time than in his, that “ought”-statements make no truth claims at all and are therefore disqualified to serve either as premises or as conclusions. I take it as certain, however, that we can reason, for example, from expressed to unstated orders, which I choose as undoubtedly having a primary function other than that of making a truth claim. From the orders “Answer questions on every page” and “Initial page on which questions are answered,” I can infer the unstated order “Initial every page.” The conjunction of the first two orders logically implies the third, in the sense that it would be impossible to obey the first two orders and not to behave as if one were obeying the third, unstated, order.9 We can exhibit logical relations between orders—or, for that matter, between promises, resolutions, and so forth—which are the same as, or at least closely analogous to, the familiar relations

9 Of course, there is more to obeying an order than performing the action prescribed by it. Cf. the recent discussion, “Imperative Inference” by B. A. O. Williams and P. T. Geach, Analysis, 23 (supp., 1963), 30-42.
of implication, equivalence, compatibility, and the like, that are involved in all arguments.

With these preliminaries out of the way, we should now be able to take a fresh and unprejudiced look at Hume's Guillotine.

To those who claim the existence of an unbridgeable logical gap between "ought" and "is," I offer for consideration the following counterexample:

Fischer wants to mate Botwinnik.  

The one and only way to mate Botwinnik is for Fischer to move the Queen.

Therefore, Fischer should move the Queen.

I am assuming that these statements refer to some game in progress.

Here, it seems to me, both premises state matters of fact, while the conclusion is a nonfactual "should"-statement. (An "ought"-statement might have been used instead, the differences between "should" and "ought" being immaterial here.)

I hope it will be agreed that the first premise, "Fischer wants to mate Botwinnik," is factual. The relevant sense of "want" is that of actively wanting, as it were—being in a state of already taking or being set to take the necessary steps to achieve the end in question—not a free-floating desire, wish, or aspiration.  

Were Fischer himself to make the corresponding first-person utterance, "I want to mate Botwinnik," he might perhaps be taken to be expressing only a resolution to achieve the end and so to be making no truth claim. But the third-person statement used as a premise in the example is a straightforward statement of fact about Fischer, supported by the usual sort of evidence about human behavior.

Anybody wishing to deny that the example discredits Hume's Guillotine will probably contend that the correct conclusion is really factual. He might say that the proper conclusion should

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10 One might wish to qualify the premise to read "Fischer wants to mate Botwinnik, if that is possible," but there is no point in the addition and the subsequent discussion is in any case unaffected.

11 Cf. G. E. M. Anscombe: "The wanting that interests us, however, is neither wishing nor hoping nor the feeling of desire, and cannot be said to exist in a man who does nothing towards getting what he wants" (Intention [Oxford, 1957], p. 67).
run “Fischer’s best move is the Queen move” or, perhaps, “The one and only way in which Fischer can win is by moving the Queen,” both of which statements are “factual” in the broad sense in which that term is here being used. The objection might run that the conclusion of my counterexample really follows from the premises only if that conclusion is itself given a factual interpretation.

For example, Professor Von Wright, in his recent paper on “Practical Inference,” argues in just this way. He considers the following “practical” argument:

\[ A \text{ wants to make the hut habitable.} \]
\[ \text{Unless } A \text{ heats the hut it will not become habitable.} \]
\[ \text{Therefore, } A \text{ must heat the hut.} \]

He asks whether the argument is “valid,” even though \( A \) may be unaware of the practical necessity of the action to be performed. Von Wright replies:

The answer depends upon how we interpret the “must.” If we understand the phrase “\( A \) must heat the hut” to mean the same as “unless \( A \) heats the hut, he will fail to attain some end of his action” or to mean the same as “there is something \( A \) wants but will not get, unless he heats the hut,” then the answer is affirmative [p. 164, italics added].

Thus Von Wright manages to certify his practical inference as valid only by interpreting its conclusion as factual. I agree that if we are asked what we mean by saying that so-and-so “must” do such and such, or “should” do such and such (the differences between the meanings of the two words being unimportant here) we should sometimes answer in the way that Von Wright has claimed. But I disagree with his implication, if it is intended, that in so doing we should be giving the meaning of our “must”-statement.

If I say to someone, “Do your best,” he might ask me whether I meant “Work as hard as you can, without worrying about success,” and I might reasonably agree that I did mean that—but the alternative forms of words do not mean the same. To say

\^{12} \text{Philosophical Review, LXXII (1963), 159-179.}
what the speaker meant may be only to specify the implications of his utterance in a given context. Now, “must,” “should,” and similar words used with normative force in practical inferences are highly schematic and admit of various specifications in alternative contexts; but to admit this is not to concede that the “must”-statements are synonymous with their appropriate specifications—nor is it to concede that the meaning of “must” varies from context to context.

I wish to argue that the “should”-conclusion of the counter-example is not intended to be merely another way of saying that the best move is such and such or that the only way the player can achieve his end is by making that move. My object is to stress the distinctively performative aspect of the utterance “Fischer should move the Queen,” while trying to show that the “should”-statement, so understood, without reduction to its factual implications in context, still follows from the premises.

In saying that there is a performative aspect to saying “Fischer should move the Queen,” I mean that a speaker who uses this form of words counts as doing something more than, or something other than, saying something having truth value. He is not just saying something that is true or false, but is doing, and counts as doing, something more than that. But what does such a speaker count as doing when he makes a “should”-statement? An adequate account of the linguistic act in question, involving an examination of the various interrelated functions of “should” (in the special kinds of contexts relevant here), would make for too lengthy a digression.

The beginnings of an answer might, however, be obtained by taking the second-person use, “You should do such and such,” as primary, in the hope of explaining the first- and third-person uses in terms of their relations to that second-person use. It is plausible to hold that the prime function of the second-person formula is to urge the hearer to adopt a course of action selected by the speaker as preferable, optimal, or correct. That the implied valuation of the courses of action available to the hearer is

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subordinate to the urging function can be seen in the following way. The speaker’s evaluation of a selected action as preferable or obligatory gives him a reason for urging his hearer to perform that action. Now, contrary to what is sometimes said, there seems to be no linguistic violation in urging a man to do something, even when the speaker has no reason with which to back the recommendation.14 There is no linguistic or conceptual impropriety about saying “I feel you should do A, though I can’t give you any reason why you should.” It might be said that the use of the second-person “should”-formula normally arouses a presumption that the speaker has reasons for saying what he does, but since the same might be said about any kind of statement whatever, this cannot be a distinctive peculiarity of the meaning or function of “should.” A further presumption is that the speaker normally wants his hearer to do what he says that he should do, but this presumption, like the one concerning the existence of supporting reasons, can be defeated in special circumstances. If I have bet heavily on your losing the game of chess in which you are engaged, I shall not want you to win, but if you ask my advice and I see that you can win by moving the Queen, I am still required to say, “You should move the Queen.”

Consider the following sequence of possible utterances:

“The one and only way in which you can mate is by moving the Queen.”

“Your best move is the Queen move.”

“You should move the Queen.”

“Move the Queen.”

The first of these is a neutral, nonperformative comment on the situation, while the last is a straightforward imperative—a forthright verbal push: the “should”-utterance stands between these, as a sort of hybrid, implying an evaluation based upon matters of fact, but partaking also of the imperative force of the bare incitement to action. According to circumstances, the use of the

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14 Thus Charles E. Caton says, “‘ought’-judgements are logically a kind of statement which must be supportable by reasons . . . if he [the speaker] cannot give reasons, he should hesitate to reiterate his assertion or should retract it” (Philosophical Quarterly, XIII [1963], 150).
“should”-utterance would count as advising, inciting, admonishing, urging, suggesting, and so on. Although we have no single word to cover all such activities, I think we can see that there is something common to all of them: in default of a better word, I shall use “advising,” in an extended sense, to cover everything we do in telling another what he should do. I want to emphasize that “should,” in second-person uses, has the practical function of “advising” (prodding, or whatever you may choose to call it), the same in all such uses. I shall not say anything here about the interestingly different third- and first-person uses of “should.”

In order to render prominent the “performative” aspect of the conclusion of my counterexample, I shall now switch to a second-person variant. Consider, therefore, any argument of the following form:

You want to achieve $E$.
Doing $M$ is the one and only way to achieve $E$.
Therefore, you should do $M$.

Here the conclusion is intended to express “advice,” and not to be merely another way of restating the factual conditions expressed by the premises. With this understanding, can we properly say that the conclusion follows by logical necessity from the premises?

It is often said that any argument of the above form is really an enthymeme with an unstated premise, possibly of the form:

Everybody should do anything which is the one and only way to achieve anything that he wants to achieve.

Since this general premise is held to be “normative” or “practical,” its addition is held to convert the original inference into a formally correct one still conforming to Hume’s Guillotine. My answer is that the proposed additional premise must be held to be analytic, in the sense of being guaranteed correct by virtue of the meanings or functions of the terms it contains. If so, its presence is unnecessary, as in the parallel case of an argument from contingent premises to a contingent conclusion. (If such an argument is valid when an analytical premise is imported, it remains so when that premise is removed.) I need not insist upon this, however. For if somebody still wishes to insert the additional general premise, I would urge upon him that the very reasons making him reluctant to agree that nonfactual conclusions might follow from
exclusively factual premises ought to make him reject the idea of a necessarily true conditional having a factual antecedent but a nonfactual consequent. Hume's Guillotine applies to such a conditional statement just as plausibly as it does to an argument. Indeed, by rendering the original argument formally valid, we are simply smuggling in the principle of inference as an extra premise and are leaving all the substantial questions of validity unsettled. (We may here recall similar moves in connection with questions about the validity of inductive inferences. Those who say that such inferences are enthymematic and insist upon adding a general premise merely shift the question of validity to that of the validity of the imported premise.)

Another misconception, traceable to Kant, consists in thinking of the conclusion of any “practical” argument as “hypothetical.” This may be intended to mean that the only correct conclusion from the given premises must have the conditional form “If you want to achieve E, you should do M.” But how can we stop there? Given, as we are, the premise that “you” do want to achieve E, modus ponens requires us to go all the way to the “categorical” conclusion “You should do M.” Unless we did intend to “go all the way,” there would be no point in invoking the first premise; for the genuinely hypothetical or conditional statement “If you want to achieve E, you should do M” follows from the second premise alone. (And of course such a conditional statement, made in ignorance of the other’s actual end, has none, or almost none, of the “prodding” force that I have ascribed to the categorical “should”-statement.)

Equally untenable is the more drastic view that “should,” as used in the contexts here considered, has a variable condition as part of its meaning. On this view, “You should do M” is elliptical and really means the same as “If you want to achieve E, you should do M.” But then what does the “should” in the expanded sentence mean? It would be absurd to repeat the maneuver by arguing that what is really meant is “If you want to achieve E, you should, if you want to achieve E, do M.” For this way lies an infinite regress. On the other hand, there is no good reason to suppose that “should” means two different things in “You should do M” and “You should do M, if you want to achieve E,” respec-
tively. A good reason against supposing this is that, were it true, arguments by *modus ponens* in which the categorical and the hypothetical statements occur together would have to count as invalid. If we want to use the traditional terminology, we must say that the conclusion of my counterexample is categorical: a man who, knowing his hearer’s end, says “You should do *M*” is advising him unconditionally, without qualifications or reservations. Those who resist this conclusion usually have in mind what might be called a “terminating” or “definitive” use of “should,” in which the speaker advises an action only after considering the case in the broadest possible perspective, including any moral considerations arising. But this kind of case is exceptional.

Those who insist on the so-called “hypothetical” nature of the “should”-conclusion have seen an important point, nevertheless. Consider the following case: *A*, playing chess with *B*, asks me for advice. I see that the one and only way to checkmate is to move the Queen and say “You should move the Queen.” A bystander, *C*, however, who has overheard this, objects that *B* is in such precarious health that the shock of being suddenly mated by an inferior player might induce a stroke and kill him. *C*, therefore, says to *A*: “You should not move the Queen—perhaps you ought to break off the game.” Is *C*’s advice or admonition in conflict with mine? If it is, I cannot properly argue that my advice follows from the two factual premises about *A*’s purpose and the necessary and sufficient condition for achieving it. For the addition of further premises—for example, about *B*’s state of health and the probable consequences to him of defeat—would produce a conclusion contrary to mine.

It seems to me that *C*’s comment involves a change of subject. When *A* asked me for advice, I rightly supposed he was consulting me as a chess player and answered accordingly. It would have been an objection to my remark to point out some other mating move, or to argue that the move I recommended would not have the desired effect. But to introduce moral considerations is to change the topic. *A* asks, “What shall I do *in this game*?” but *C* replies, in effect, “Don’t play the game at all!” Of course, I am not suggesting that moral considerations are subordinate to those of chess strategy; nor am I implying that it was wrong for
C to answer as he did because he was not asked for moral advice. It may be morally right to answer irrelevantly—as when asked for technical advice on firearms by a would-be murderer.

The truth behind the view that the conclusions of “practical” arguments are hypothetical seems to be about as follows. The use of “should” and its normative cognates in such contexts is specified in a certain way, usually made plain by the nature of the context. “You should do M” has the force of “You should do M—given that you are playing chess and that the question is about that.” One might say it is a presupposition that the advice, according to circumstances, is restricted to answering a question about game strategy, a legal question, a prudential one, and so on. (It is no doubt an important point about moral injunctions that they cannot be restricted or limited in a parallel fashion. It is normally absurd to say, “It is your duty to do M—given...” Given what? Nothing seems to fit except “given that you are a moral agent” and even that imposes no restriction analogous to those I have mentioned.) Henry Sidgwick stated the point accurately when he said of Kant’s so-called hypothetical imperatives that “they are not addressed to anyone who has not accepted the end.”15

I turn now to my main question. Given that you want to achieve E and that doing M is the one and only way of achieving E, does it follow as a logical necessity that you should do M? It is obvious that the truth of the factual premises provides at least a good reason for saying “You should do M.” Indeed, the truth of the premises constitutes a conclusive reason for saying, in the given context, “You should do M.” Given that my interlocutor is playing chess and solicits advice about the game, the fact, if it is a fact, that he can mate the opponent only by moving the Queen provides me with a conclusive reason for urging him to do that rather than anything else. It would be absurd to say “The one and only way you can mate the opponent is by moving your Queen—and that’s why I say you should not move the Queen!” If we heard someone say this, apparently in earnest, we should reasonably suppose him to have made a slip of the tongue, to be joking, transmitting a code message, making some esoteric allusion,

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or otherwise using his words in some unusual way. Were all other suppositions to fail, we might even conclude that he did not understand what he was saying. But no sense could be made of the supposition that he did understand what he said, spoke literally, and still meant what he seemed to be saying. The test I have been applying here parallels a test we might apply to an argument with factual premises and a factual conclusion. Given a simple argument patently invalid, say of the form “P, if P then Q, therefore not-Q,,” we could make no sense of the supposition that somebody might utter it, understand what he was saying, and mean what he seemed to be saying. If this test does not fully express what we mean by saying that the factual premises entail the factual conclusion, it at least constitutes a strong criterion of entailment.16

There is one important difference between the case I have just cited and that of a practical inference from “is” to “should.” When a man thinks that P and also that if P then Q, it is logically impossible for him not to think also that Q: he may of course assert the premises explicitly without uttering the conclusion, but it is impossible that he should fail to think Q—say it “in his heart” as it were. To assert the premise in question while showing signs of doubting or wondering about the conclusion would be an indication of stupidity, failure to understand, or some other cognitive deficiency. (This case needs to be distinguished from that previously discussed, in which the speaker seems to be asserting not-Q.) But a man might refuse to say “You should do M,” even though he had affirmed the factual premises whose truth constituted a conclusive reason for making the “should”-statement: having conscientious scruples about giving advice in such cases, he might have trained himself so well to abstain from giving it that he did not even think “You should do M” in his heart. We could not properly call such a man irrational or ignorant of the language. Because giving advice is performing a voluntary

16 R. M. Hare defines entailment as follows: “A sentence P entails a sentence Q if and only if the fact that a person assents to P but dissents from Q is a sufficient criterion for saying that he has misunderstood one or other of the sentences” (Language of Morals, [Oxford, 1952], p. 25). This is unsatisfactory, for fairly obvious reasons.
action, a man may in general abstain from the activity without incurring a charge of irrationality. Giving advice by means of "should"-formulas is a linguistic practice just as much as the making of promises is; and just as a man may have reasons so good for making a certain promise that it would be irrational for him to give a contrary promise but might choose not to make a promise at all, so also in the case of "advice."

This important point of difference between the two cases may help to explain the common insistence that moral conclusions cannot follow from factual premises. Suppose for the sake of argument that a moral injunction of the form "I ought to do such and such" might be related to nonmoral premises in a manner analogous to the relation I have claimed to obtain between the conclusion and the premises of my counterexample: then a man accepting the nonmoral premises would not, as a matter of logical necessity, have to accept the moral conclusion and so be required to think it. For he might in such cases refrain from drawing the moral implications from the facts: this would not be an indication of incapacity to reason or failure to understand the meaning of "ought" but might be a sign of moral deficiency. (One can sometimes blamelessly abstain from nonmoral practices, but nobody has the right in general to neglect relevant moral considerations.)

Too much must not be made of this admission. If a moral conclusion is ever related to nonmoral premises in the fashion I have imagined, then, given that a moral conclusion is to be drawn, we have no choice as to which conclusion it shall be. Or, to return to my original example, given that the speaker is committed to offering some advice or other, the only advice that he can rationally offer is "You should do $M$." That is why, upon being asked to consider the complex conditional question "Given that $A$ wants to achieve $E$ and that $M$ is the one and only way for him to achieve that end, should he do $M$?" we feel the compulsion to answer "Of course!" Courtesy, if nothing else, obliges us to consider the question raised and so to adopt the posture of a judge. It would have to be a very exceptional kind of person who could evade the question by saying "I never pass judgment."

For the reasons now before us, I am reluctant to say that the practical "should"-conclusion is entailed by its factual premises:
the important contrast with straightforward cases of entailment might indeed be marked by using some such label as "latent necessity" or "virtual necessity." On my view, the practical conclusion is "hypothetical" in quite another way from that in which Kant thought of the matter: between the factual premises and the practical conclusion there is a sort of gap, bridgeable only by an agent's willingness to engage in the relevant activity or practice. The truth of the premises restricts the performance, whether that of "advising" or something else, to a single possibility, but there will be no performance at all unless the agent chooses to follow the path.

Given the truth of the factual premises concerning a man's end and the necessary and sufficient condition for attaining that end, and given that one is to make some second-person "should"-statement, one must say "You should do M"—and nothing else will do. What kind of a "must" is this? It seems to mean here precisely what "must" means when we say that anybody affirming the premises of a valid deductive argument must also affirm that argument's conclusion. Choice of the given "should"-statement is enforced by the rules, understandings, or conventions governing the correct uses of "should" and the other words occurring in the argument: nobody who understands the premises of the practical argument and knows the rules for the proper use of "should" can honestly offer any other "should"-conclusion. In this respect, the parallel with "theoretical" arguments is strong. Accordingly, no special "practical" logic is needed in such cases: the relevant principles are the familiar ones employed throughout deductive reasoning.

The general pattern for other cases of the relation between a practical or performative utterance and factual reasons for making that utterance may be explained as follows. In the case of some performatives, though not in all, some of the conventions governing the correct use of the performatives prescribe that if certain factual conditions obtain, only a determinate, specifiable performative of the type in question may properly be used.17 If we

17 In terms of Austin's analysis of the "infelicities" of performatives in his How to Do Things with Words (Oxford, 1962), pp. 14-15, what I am calling
form a practical argument, whose premises state the factual conditions in question while its conclusion expresses the relevant performatives, we shall then have a case analogous to those I have been discussing. For instance, the following seems to me a "strict" practical argument:

Unless I do something about it, you will take action A.
If you take action A, you will be killed.
Therefore, I warn you not to take action A.

If I am to warn you at all—which is not necessary, except possibly on moral grounds—I must use the negative warning formula, on pain of misusing language. Indeed, the case is very close to the earlier ones discussed in this paper, since one way of giving the warning would be to say "You should not do A."

My conclusion, therefore, comes to this: some nonfactual conclusions do follow and can be shown to follow from factual premises, even when proper allowance has been made for the "performatives" aspects of such conclusions.

Very little might be held to have been accomplished by making such trivial arguments as I have considered logically respectable. But once Hume's Guillotine has been discredited, we may hope to find more important arguments containing valid transitions from "is" to "should" or from "is" to "ought." If I am not mistaken, the following argument from factual premises to a moral conclusion is valid:

Doing A will produce pain.
Apart from producing the pain resulting from A, doing A will have the same consequences that not doing A would have had.
Therefore, A ought not to be done.

In other words, if the consequences of doing some action differ from those of abstaining from that action only by producing avoidable pain, that action ought not to be done. If I am to be

"factual conditions" fall under what he calls the "circumstances . . . [which] . . . must be appropriate for the invocation of the particular procedure invoked" (p. 15). Austin would count the use of the wrong performative in the circumstances I envisage as a "misinvocation" (p. 18) of the special sort that he calls a "misapplication" (ibid.). It is an understatement to say, as Austin does, that the act is then "disallowed" (ibid.). I am urging that logic requires the act to be rejected as improper.
shown mistaken in this claim, somebody will have to demonstrate that a person ready to make a moral judgment and accepting the premises could decline to make the moral judgment expressed by the conclusion, without thereby convicting himself of failure to understand the terms used, or some other cognitive defect. A detailed demonstration is required—not an appeal to a dogma which ought by now to have been finally exploded.

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