

## Value statements differ from factual statements

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**Abstract:** In axiology it is customary to make a clear distinction between facts and values. A corresponding distinction is made between value statements and factual statements. This distinction constitutes the subject of this article.

**Keywords:** axiology, custom, facts, and values

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### I. Introduction

Value is a concept about what is fundamentally good or desirable that an individual holds onto as a guide through life. A value may be explicit or implicit, unique to an individual or characteristic of a group. **Source: W. Fox and Ivan H. Meyer: Public administration Dictionary, 1995:134**

Most philosophers agree that value statements differ from factual statements. How do philosophers account for the difference?

### II. Purpose of article

The purpose of this article is to make a clear distinction between value statements and factual statements and giving examples.

### III. Axiological uses and analysis between facts and values.

Axiological uses and analyses will always entail three conceptual clarifications and follows:

- a. Sensorily empirically observable properties;
- b. Aesthetically artistic evaluative terms; and
- c. Ethically moral and evaluative terms.

In axiology, it is customary to make a clear distinction between facts and values. A corresponding distinction is made between factual statements and value statements. We shall make an alert distinction and clarification of three concepts by means of two examples:

Assume that several people study a painting and that the following statements are made:

1. The dimensions of the painting are 7ft by 9 ft.
2. The painting is an oil – painting.
3. There are at least four colours in the painting.
4. The painting is beautiful.
5. The painting is expensive.

The *first three statements* express something about the *sensorily empirically observable properties* of the painting. They state certain facts about the painting. The truth or falsity of the three statements is testable by empirical observation as to whether the painting indeed does have the ascribed properties in the statements. We can test the truth or falsity of (1) by actually measuring the painting; we can test (2) by close inspection of the canvas for the type of paint used.

Statement (4) does not express a fact. This becomes clear in the case where two persons agree as to the factual characteristics of the painting, but disagree as to whether it is *beautiful or not*. Should a dispute arise as to the empirical properties of the painting, a settlement is found by empirical observation. If one person contends that it is painted in oils, whereas another maintains that it is a water-colour, a suitable investigation into the properties of the paint settles the argument.

But such settlement is impossible in the case of difference in *evaluation*. *Value terms* like *beautiful* are used to evaluate objects *aesthetically* and this sort of term, as well as all other value terms, must be distinguished from terms employed for referring to one or another empirical property.

From the above examples, we were concerned with concepts having a *descriptive function* and with concepts having an *evaluative function*. Some concepts have both descriptive and evaluative functions. An example is 5. When somebody asserts that a painting is expensive, this is stating that it costs a great deal of money, and that it has great *artistic merit*. He is simultaneously making an *aesthetic* evaluation and stating a fact.

**The difference between ethical and aesthetic values.**

The example of the painting illustrates the phenomenon of *aesthetic evaluation* that is the evaluation of objects in terms of beautiful, or ugly. A better known form of evaluation is the *ethical*. In ethical evaluation, the conduct of people is evaluated in terms of good/bad and right/wrong.

### **1. Aesthetic evaluation**

Certain aesthetic objects are valued by virtue of the presence of certain properties. Examples: the beautiful, the tragic, the comic and the talented.

### **2. Ethical evaluation**

**We positively evaluate certain ways of conduct. Examples: love, honesty, right, and good.**

**Differences of a fact and a value by definition.**

*A fact is an objectively observable state of affairs; a factual statement is a statement referring to one or another such state of affairs.*

A value statement is a statement in which the evaluation of objects or ways of conduct is expressed. Value concepts have primarily an evaluative function, empirical concepts are characterized by the fact that they refer to observable properties (descriptive function).

The meaning of the term “value”

In order to explore fully the meaning of the term “value” let us distinguish between first-order statements and second –order statement. by first-order statements we understand statements about the world, and second order statement mean statements about statements –about – the –world. By way of illustration:

1. This paper is white.
2. My pen is red.
3. The Prime Minister is young.

We regard these three expressions as factual statements, that is, as first – order statements which inform us of something about the world. All the three statements have two common elements: there is involved in each an individual having a particular property. In his connection we distinguish between logical proper names and predicates. The concepts proper name and property (predicates) is second – order concepts which we use for referring synoptically to certain common elements in 1 to 3.

The concept value is a second – order concept. By illustration, we use this concept to refer summarily to a common element in the following statements:

- (a) A acts rightly in assisting his ill neighbor.
- (b) B was right in not charging much for his services to the poor man.
- (c) C did good when he aided the injured parties.
- (d) This painting is beautiful
- (e) The new prefect is a good car.

All the five statements involve evaluation. We use the concept “value” to refer summarily to the common element, the evaluation. In summarily asserting that certain acts or objects have value, our meaning is that those acts or objects are positively evaluated within certain contexts. Let us take it that the first three cases above involve the manifestation of neighbourly love. We may state: “neighbourly love is a value” Neighbourly love and value are in this case both second-order concepts referring to certain common elements in (a) to (c) above. There is in each case, the positive evaluation or approval of the said actions. It must be definitely clear that a concepts referring summarily to the common elements’ occurring is in certain second order statements.

It is sometimes said that a thing has value or that it is a value. It is said that a painting has aesthetic value or that neighbourly love is an ethical value. The painting is called a value object that is an object on which ethical evaluation is involved.

In general terms, we say that evaluation always assumes one or another form of approval of disapproval. When we say a man acts rightly, we are approving his conduct. When we say he acts wrongly, we are disapproving his conduct. But evaluation is not confined to ethical and aesthetic contexts: the contexts in which we can evaluate are unlimited. We speak not only of good, conduct and beautiful paintings; we speak also of good cars, good textbooks, good students, good fountain pens, good waterdogs, and so on.

It must be rememberable that the expression of approval is not limited to the utterance of value statements. A person can say that he approves certain conduct without it being apparent from his demeanor that he is assigning a value to that conduct. The expression of value statements is merely an element in one’s own axiological life: One does not approve merely by saying that one approves – one’s approval is evinced by one’s attitude in a ethical situation. Where person A approves acts X, this approval is evinced by A’s behaviour. Value concepts cannot be defined In terms of description concepts and value statements cannot be deduced from factual statements.

## **IV. Conclusion**

Value statements are not deducible from factual statements. From what is, we cannot infer what ought to be. By saying that value statements are not deducible from factual statements, we mean that no necessary connection exists between factual concepts and value concepts. I may just evaluate the phenomenon negatively as positively. We can at most content that there is an empirical relatedness between a given state of affairs and the positive evaluation of it by a given person.

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