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# WHAT TYPES OF STATEMENTS ARE THERE? A PHILOSOPHICAL LOOK AT STASIS THEORY

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## *Abstract:*

We have argued that premise acceptability, broadly speaking, amounts to there being a presumption in favor of the premise. We have also argued that presumption is dependent on the sources which have vouched for a statement. We have further claimed that whether a source's vouching for a statement creates a presumption for it depends in part on what type of statement is being vouched for. Suppose a proponent *P* vouches for both of these statements: "There is a red apple on the window sill." "Horatio placed the red apple on the window sill to show his love for Ophelia." Intuitively, there is an air of controversiality or at least questionability about the second statement which does not apply to the first. We are inclined to ask for evidence for the second statement, but not for the first. I believe we can explain why this is the case, and that part of the explanation consists in pointing out that the first statement is a description while the second is an interpretation. But this brings us to the issue of what types of statements are there and how we distinguish them. The field of rhetoric known as stasis theory addresses these issues. However, different rhetoricians give different typologies of statements, and proposed criteria for distinguishing types of statements involve serious philosophical difficulties. Building on the work of Sproule, Fahnestock and Secor, and Kruger, we shall present a specific typology of statements. In particular, we shall distinguish descriptions, interpretations, evaluations, and necessary statements as the basic types of statement. We shall also give accounts of the distinguishing features of each type. In doing this, we shall be giving a philosophical explication of these distinctions from stasis theory. We shall conclude by showing how this account of the various types of statements fits into an overall account of premise acceptability.

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Consider the following two statements:

1. There is a red apple on the window sill.
2. The red apple on the window sill means that Horatio loves Ophelia.

Statement (1) seems a straightforward assertion of fact. We can just see whether it is true or false. It does not seem to be the sort of statement one would argue *for*. By the same token, therefore, it would seem perfectly appropriate to take (1) as a premise, indeed a basic, undefended premise, in an argument, should that advance the case for the conclusion one is trying to show. (1), unless it were plainly false, would be an acceptable premise. By contrast, there is a distinct air of controversiality about (2). How do we know that the public occurrence of the red apple on the window sill is a sign of a certain private, mental disposition on the part of Horatio? It may be true. There may be good evidence for it. But we want to have that evidence. It would not ordinarily, then, be appropriate to take (2) as a basic, undefended premise in an argument. Without this further

evidence, the premise would not be acceptable.

(1) and (2) are paradigm examples of what the rhetorician J. Michael Sproule classifies as descriptions and interpretations respectively. The branch of rhetoric known as stasis theory is concerned with the categorization of statements. This raises a very intriguing question. If (1), a description, appears to be a straightforwardly acceptable premise while (2), an interpretation, does not, is there some connection between their being a description or interpretation on the one hand and their acceptability or unacceptability as premises on the other? That is, can stasis theory advance the problem of premise acceptability, an open problem in the area of informal logic and argumentation theory? Will recognizing the category to which a statement belongs advance our understanding, at least in part, of whether the statement is acceptable? I believe this is the case and shall sketch the connection between stasis theory and premise acceptability at the end of this paper. But to do this, we need to have our categorization scheme for statements in front of us. That, in turn, means that we have identified at least the basic categories of statements and have a defensible rationale for distinguishing those categories. That is the main subject of this paper.

It is not hard to understand why rhetoricians would have an interest in classifying statements. If we are concerned with effectiveness or persuasiveness in argumentation, an obvious first step would be to ask what are the types of statements one would have to argue for. Different types of statements may call for different argumentative strategies. Perhaps we simply do not argue for certain types of statements. As Fahnestock and Secor point out, we do not argue about matters of taste. J. Michael Sproule offers a threefold classification of statements in *Argument: Language and Its Influence*.<sup>1</sup> Sproule distinguishes descriptions, interpretations, and evaluations. Sproule understands a description as a claim involving an issue of fact, an issue concerning "the existence or objective correctness of something."<sup>2</sup> We might expect to get virtually universal agreement on an issue of fact from all rational judges.<sup>3</sup> Further, claims of fact are open to independent verification, being framed in observational language.<sup>4</sup> A fact, then,

must meet each of the following three tests: (1) It must be something that can be independently verified; (2) it must be capable of being "mapped" (i.e. precisely described); and (3) it must be something that can win the agreement of all reasonable persons.<sup>5</sup>

Interpretations for Sproule raise primarily issues of definition. He elaborates this by saying that interpretations place facts into categories, relate facts, place them in perspective. We may say that they give facts a meaning, where we understand giving meaning as relating something to a wider whole. In an evaluation, the principle issue is a value of some sort. What is right or wrong, good or bad, preferable or not preferable, praiseworthy or blameworthy, virtuous or vicious?

In *A Rhetoric of Argument*, Jeanne Fahnestock and Marie Secor present a related classification of statements. They begin by identifying two types of issues they claim we do not argue about—matters of fact and matters of taste. Rather, there are four basic questions arguments may address:

- (1) What is it?
- (2) How did it get that way?
- (3) Is it good or bad?
- (4) What should we do about it?

These questions then generate a typology of statements.

How does this typology relate to the tripartite scheme we have just considered? Matters of fact obviously correspond to descriptions. Fahnestock and Secor characterize a fact as "a statement that can be verified,"<sup>6</sup> and modes of verification are public procedures. Furthermore, once there is agreement on verification procedure, rational persons will accept the outcome as determining whether or not a statement describes a fact. Does the claim that we do not argue about matters of fact mean that we need not include a category of descriptions in our classification scheme for statements? Not at all. First of all, even if we do not argue *for* facts, we certainly argue *from* them in defending further claims. Fahnestock and Secor are trying to develop a classification scheme for arguable statements, those that could become the subject of controversy and so become conclusions in arguments, rather than for all statements. Since we are concerned here with premise acceptability, their regarding descriptions as not arguable statements is still compatible with regarding descriptions as a legitimate, distinct type of statement. But we can question Fahnestock and Secor's claim that we do not argue for descriptions. Suppose someone were accused of a crime. Then certain purely factual issues would be crucial to establishing guilt. The prosecution might expend great effort marshalling evidence to establish these facts, to verify them. But wouldn't this be to argue for those facts?

Answers to the question "What is it?" are categorical propositions in the sense that a subject is related to a predicate. Although arguments for such claims may have distinctive procedures, the examples which Fahnestock and Secor all give seem to fall under one or the other of the description/ interpretation/evaluation categories. They cite such statements as "That cat is grey," a clear description, "That cat is a nuisance." a clear evaluation, and "Representative government is time-consuming," an interpretation, as all instances of categorical propositions. It does not appear that any of their examples cannot be included in Sproule's tripartite classification, although some may be examples of mixed statements. "Man is a beast to man" seems to be both an interpretation and an evaluation. We see no reason to count categorical propositions as an additional fourth type of statement. "How did it get that way?" are causal statements. Sproule counts causal claims as one type of interpretation. So these statements are again already accounted for on our description/interpretation/evaluation scheme. To say that we *should* perform some action or follow some policy is to evaluate that action or policy positively. To be sure, the questions "Is it good or bad?" and "What should we do about it?" are distinct, different questions. Arguing for a claim that something is good or bad might proceed rather differently from arguing for a claim that we should follow some course of action. As Fahnestock and Secor point out, to argue that something is good or bad we should proceed either to measure it against some criterion of goodness or to show that it has good or bad consequences.<sup>7</sup> To argue for a policy statement or proposal, we should show that some current situation or some aspect of a current situation is a problem in need of change or improvement, advance our proposal, and then show how it remediates the problem. The procedure for supporting proposals, then, may very well incorporate the procedure for showing evaluations proper. If our goal is to examine what makes for persuasively effective argument, the goal for rhetoricians, it makes a great deal of sense then to separate proposals from evaluations. But if our purpose is to distinguish types of statements with a view to understanding whether and how they constitute acceptable basic premises, that we should distinguish evaluations from proposals is not at all clear. To say that you should or must perform some action or avoid some action is surely to say that your doing that action is preferable to your not doing it or *vice versa*. It is to evaluate it. So answers to the policy question are a subclass of evaluations and thus also accommodated on our tripartite scheme.

In "The Nature of Controversial Statements," Arthur N. Kruger explicitly considers the issue of classifying arguable statements. According to Kruger, the early Latin rhetoricians in effect accepted the description/interpretation/evaluation distinction. One could dispute about whether a thing is-a question of fact, what it is-a question of definition, or what kind it is-a question of evaluative category. Is an action justified or unjustified, a proposed goal good or bad?<sup>8</sup> Modern textbooks retain descriptions and evaluations, but drop

interpretations for policy claims, according to Kruger.<sup>9</sup> He is dissatisfied with these schemes, at least with current schemes. He complains that they leave many gaps, in particular ignoring the distinction between empirical and analytic statements.<sup>10</sup>

In developing his own scheme, Kruger begins with that very distinction of definitional or analytic from factual or empirical statements. Not every analytic statement is self-evident for Kruger, however, for he counts analytically false or self-contradictory statements as analytic. For Kruger, statements are analytic just in case "analyzing their form or meaning enables us to tell if they are true or false."<sup>11</sup> Turning to non-analytic statements, Kruger identifies two broad subtypes, factual and evaluative. He characterizes factual statements by giving examples of some representative types. These include descriptions, comprising not only perceptually verifiable claims, but ascriptions of personality traits and power *vis-a-vis* governmental office. Factual statements also comprise correlations, claims that one condition is followed by or connected with another, causal explanations, and predictions. Evaluative statements may have a number of uses, including expressing approval or disapproval of something as a means to some end, asserting that some person or thing satisfies or fails to satisfy certain normative criteria, or judging the merits of some policy. For Kruger, policy statements are evaluations, although he is willing to allow them a separate heading in an overall classification of controversial statements.

These considerations suggest that we should adopt, at least as a working hypothesis, a fourfold classification of statements: to descriptions, interpretations, evaluations we should add the class of analytic statements. However, it would be better if we spoke of necessary as opposed to analytic statements. Where do mathematical statements fall in our classification? Although some philosophers have regarded mathematical statements as analytic, there are decisive objections to this view. Frege believed that all of mathematics could be reduced to logic, whose principles *are* analytic. But when Frege presented his reduction of mathematics to logic, it was to higher-order logic that he would make his reduction. This is obvious from his comprehension axiom which quantifies over properties:

$$(\forall F)(\exists x)(\forall y) [y \in x \equiv Fy]$$

Since, as is widely known, this comprehension axiom leads directly to Russell's paradox, Frege's project was not successful. Much work in modern mathematics has been devoted to reducing mathematics to set theory, variously axiomatized to avoid the paradoxes. Is set theory logic? Quine in *Philosophy of Logic* points out a significant feature of set theory which differentiates it from logic. "As soon as we admit '*'*' as a genuine predicate, and classes as values of quantifiable variables, we are embarked on a substantive mathematical theory."<sup>12</sup> Set theory, then, does not appear to be analytic, and it is to set theory that the rest of mathematics is reduced. But surely many of the propositions of mathematics intuitively have the necessity of such obviously analytic propositions as the basic truth-functional tautologies or such clear semantic truths as "All bachelors are unmarried." Hence, we shall adopt as our basic scheme of categories for statements the fourfold classification into descriptions, interpretations, evaluations, and necessary statements.

Broadly logical necessity is a philosophically and logically central concept. When in alethic modal logic we assert a statement of the form '*NA*,' we understand that it is broadly logical necessity which is being ascribed here. Semantically, we understand the concept as truth in all possible worlds. Identifying whether or not a statement is necessary in this sense is straightforward in many circumstances. Surely it is a basic freshman exercise to recognize tautologies as logically necessary statements in contrast to claims about current states of affairs, which are contingent. So to recognize a class of necessary statements seems unproblematic.

Likewise, to recognize a class of evaluations seems straightforward. Since an evaluation categorizes something as

good or bad, better or worse, preferable or avoidable, right or wrong, praiseworthy or blameworthy, obligatory, advisable, permissible, forbidden, in some sense or to some degree, we can tell by inspection that a statement is an evaluation. In *The Nature of Human Values*, Milton Rokeach characterizes a value as "an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence."<sup>13</sup> An evaluation is a statement which expresses such a belief. Thus

1. It was good for me to be afflicted.-Psalm 119:71a (NIV)
2. It is better to be Socrates unsatisfied than a pig satisfied.-J.S. Mill
3. You should repay that debt.
4. Extremism in the defense of liberty is no vice and moderation is no virtue.-Sen. Barry Goldwater

all present evaluations and in each case this is immediate from the statement itself. Again many words, especially those which are emotionally charged in some way, serve to express value judgments. Thus, William Buckley's assertion that

5. The released draft of the Roman Catholic bishops' pastoral letter on the American economy is "a document of striking intellectual slovenliness."

is clearly an evaluation-a very negative one.

In maintaining this fourfold classification, we are following Sproule rather than Kruger, who apparently combined descriptions and interpretations into one class of factual statements. We believe it is very important to distinguish between descriptions and evaluations, but we admit that this classification and how it has been made is problematic. Philosophically it would be unfortunate to take making statements of fact as the defining condition of descriptions. First of all, this categorization seems too broad. Couldn't we say of any expression which asserts the truth, i.e. of any true statement, that it asserts a fact? If I want to say that a statement S is true, can't I say "It is a fact that S"? Is it wrong to say

It is a fact that cigarette smoking causes lung cancer.

That stealing, except in very exceptional circumstances, is wrong is a fact?

If interpretations and evaluations are classes of statements distinct from descriptions, and descriptions concern issues of fact, then the above two statements are incorrect, or at best anomalous or misleading. For

Smoking causes lung cancer

is an interpretation, while

Stealing, except in very exceptional circumstances, is wrong

is an evaluation. But this just shows up the inadequacy of the characterization, for surely these statements are not anomalous or misleading. If descriptions be issues of fact, what is to prevent us from characterizing any true statement, or any statement about which we feel distinctly confident, as a description?

There is another side to this coin of defining descriptions as statements of fact; one which has dangerous suggestions philosophically. For if descriptions concern facts, are they the only type of statement which can be true or false? If interpretations and evaluations are not descriptions then, this suggests that interpretations and evaluations are not factual, *i.e.* not the sort of statements to be true or false. But since interpretations include

causal judgments and evaluations moral judgments, this would suggest that neither of such judgments are true or false—a highly controversial claim which should not be prejudiced by a matter of terminology. If interpretations, evaluations are neither true nor false, are they mere expressions of opinion, taste, or emotion? Is the issue of rational agreement out of place here? What these considerations show is that we should regard the characterization of descriptions as statements drawing issues of fact as only a heuristic or programmatic suggestion. To develop an adequate characterization of descriptions, we must go further. Let us begin by looking at some examples of statements which appear intuitively, but straightforwardly to be descriptions.

1. A bus is passing my office window.
2. The house across the street is painted white.
3. Caesar crossed the Rubicon.
4. During the second week of January, 30 homeless persons were found dead on the streets of New York.
5. Fifty percent of the voters said they disapproved of the president's job performance.
6. All the subjects in the experiment displayed cold symptoms.
7. All swans are white.

We have a variety of statements here, illustrating the various types of descriptions. Reports concern particular events or conditions. (1) and (3) make reports of events, either present or past, while (2) reports a condition. (4) and (5) present summaries of reports, while (6) and (7) are accidental universal generalizations. We say that these universal generalizations are accidental because there is no nomic ascription here. These generalizations merely assert constant conjunctions; whatever satisfies the antecedent clause also satisfies the consequent, and this is a matter of contingent fact. They do not express a stronger or in some sense necessary connection between antecedent and consequent, in particular they do not underlie or support subjunctive or contrary-to-fact conditionals. Unlike "Objects when dropped above the surface of the earth always fall at an accelerating rate," which supports "If that object were dropped, it would fall at an accelerating rate," (6) does not support that "If John were a subject in the experiment, then he would develop cold symptoms." Universal generalizations which do support subjunctive or contrary-to-fact conditionals are nomic universals.<sup>14</sup> But the accidental, non-nomic character of these universal generalizations is the clue to identifying the hallmark of descriptions.

What all these statements have in common is that they are both contingent and their truth conditions are extensional. That is, in specifying the conditions under which these statements would be true, we would not make any reference to other possible worlds, as we would for modalized statements. This should be clear from the fact that all the predicates appearing in these examples are observational. Whether or not they apply is something we can tell by observation of states of affairs in this world. I propose that we take these two conditions—truth conditional extensionality and contingency—as the defining conditions of descriptions. Atomic descriptions then make extensional ascriptions of properties or relations to substantives. We may form truth-functional compounds of such atomic descriptions, and we may form statistical or quantificational statements from extensional predicates. All of these statements will be descriptions.

### *What are Interpretations?*

If descriptions are contingent and extensional, are interpretations contingent and intensional? This would define the class of interpretations too broadly, for many evaluative statements, in particular those involving the deontic modalities "it ought to be the case that" and "it is permissible that" are both contingent statements (i.e. not broadly

logically necessary) and intensional in the sense that their truth conditions can be investigated through an intensional semantics of possible worlds. But statements such as

It ought to be the case that all children are vaccinated.  
It is permissible to cast an absentee ballot.

are evaluations, not interpretations. Interpretations are intimately related to one type or family of modalized statements, however, that of subjunctive or counterfactual conditionals, statements of the form

If it were the case that A, then it would be the case that B.

Notice that subjunctive conditionals are not logically necessary, yet they are intensional statements, witness the various systems of possible world semantics that have been put forward for them. Many interpretations support subjunctive conditionals in the sense that if the interpretation is true, then some subjunctive conditional is true and the intensionality of the interpretation can be understood through this support. To see this, consider three primary classes of interpretations: causal statements, attributions of significance, and comparisons or what might be more precisely called attributions of relevant significance. [15](#)

### *Causal Statements*

Causal statements are paradigm examples of interpretations. To ascribe a causal connection, either by asserting a general causal law, that one type of event is causally connected with another, or that specific events are linked as cause and effect, is to incorporate events or conditions, or types of events or conditions, into wider wholes. Consider

1. Heating water to 100C causes it to boil.
2. Smoking causes lung cancer.
3. Abolishing the death penalty has raised the homicide rate.
4. The impact caused the windshield to shatter.
5. The patients' fever caused their pallor.

Whatever "causality" may mean or whatever types of causality one might distinguish, none of these statements assert mere matter of fact conjunctions. To assert that one type of event or practice causes events or conditions of some further type, or that particular events or conditions cause further events or conditions, as statements (1)-(5) all do, is to connect these events or types of events together in a causal nexus, a larger whole. In particular, to say that *A* causes *B* indicates that *B* is not a surd. It did not just happen but had a causal antecedent to which it is nomically connected and thus related, in the light of which it is intelligible—at least to some degree.

We may count as causal statements not only those which assert some causal connection between certain events or conditions, but those which indicate the strength or importance of causal factors. Thus

6. Nicotine is the prime factor in producing the health risks associated with cigarette smoking.
7. The paper out of which cigarettes are made plays a negligible role in adversely affecting health.

Especially with examples (1)-(5), it is straightforward to see that causal statements support subjunctive or counterfactual conditionals. Indeed, causal statements are paradigm examples of laws of nature and a hallmark of



a law of nature is supporting subjunctive or counterfactual conditionals.

- 1'. If a body of water were heated to 100C, then the water would boil.
- 2'. If one were to smoke, then one's chances of developing lung cancer would increase.
- 3'. If one were to abolish the death penalty in a given jurisdiction, then the homicide rate in that jurisdiction would increase.
- 4'. If a windshield were subjected to similar forces, it would likewise shatter.
- 5'. If persons were suffering from the same fever, they would likewise be pale.

It is also basically straightforward to see how (6) supports a subjunctive conditional:

- 6'. If one were to expose a population just to nicotine in the amounts to which smokers are generally exposed, then that population would display more health problems than populations exposed just to some other health inhibiting factor in cigarette smoke.

Statement (7), however, is in effect a negative rather than a positive causal assertion. It tells us that paper used in making cigarettes does not have a causal role in adversely affecting public health. But surely if positive causal statements are interpretations, so are their negations. Indeed, more generally we should want to allow that claims that an event occurred at random or that certain events happened by chance are also interpretations. These in effect are denials of causation. They are claims that certain events were not caused.

Allowing that the negations of interpretations are themselves interpretations requires refining our assertion that interpretations support counterfactuals. A claim that a particular event  $E$  happened at random or by chance does not support a claim that if certain antecedent circumstances  $AC$  were to occur, then  $E$  would happen. Notice that it does not even support the 'might' counterfactual [16](#) that if certain antecedent circumstances  $AC$  were to occur,  $E$  might not happen. An event might happen at random in some circumstances but not in others. There might be lawlike connections between  $E$  and certain antecedent circumstances, in particular between  $E$  and  $AC$ . To be more precise, then, we should say that it is positive interpretations which support counterfactuals. Again, does the claim that  $E$  happened at random relate  $E$  to some wider whole or context? It actually denies that  $E$  is so related, at least to a causal context or nexus. But to make this denial, that statement has to employ, at least implicitly, concepts predicating such relatedness. For this reason, it is still appropriate to count the claim of chance or randomness as an interpretation. We take it that these refinements do not undercut our main characterization of interpretations, motivated by positive examples.

### *Attributions of Significance*

As Walton points out in *Argument Structure: A Pragmatic Theory*, where there is an established causal connection between  $A$  and  $B$ , instances of  $B$  may be taken as signs of  $A$ . Specific, overt statements that  $A$  signifies  $B$  or that  $A$  means  $B$  are paradigmatic examples of interpretations.

1. That those two surfaces are both so hot is a sign that they have been just now rubbed together.
2. The smoke coming from the chimney means that the plant is operating again.

But attributions of significance may assert actions to be signs of their motivations and not just external events to be signs of their causal antecedents.

3. By directing a missile over Norwegian and Finnish air space, the Russians are trying to send the United States a signal.

4. If the recent election told us anything it is that most Americans don't want any sharing of wealth with the poor.-Carl T. Rowan, November 18, 1984

To say that one event is a sign of some further event, process, intention is to assert that there is some nomic connection between the two, but not to assert the nature of that connection. The sign need not be the effect or result of what is signified. Sign and thing signified could both be effects of some one cause, and so tied together in some causal nexus, although one does not cause the other, as in (5) and (6).

5. Frozen water in the gutter means the thermometer will read below 32F.

6. A temperature over 104 means the patient's life is in danger.

Although saying that one event is a sign of some further event, process, intention is not asserting the nature of that connection between the two, it is asserting nomic connection. These statements support subjunctive or contrary to fact conditionals.

1'. If two surfaces were to be both similarly hot, then both might have been rubbed together.

It is straightforward to construct the associated subjunctive conditionals for each of (2)-(6) and to see in each case that the truth of the attribution of significance supports the truth of the subjunctive conditional. It is also obvious that by making an attribution of significance, the sign is related to some wider whole which renders it more meaningful or intelligible. The signs are invested with a significance-they are seen to have a meaning, or are claimed to have a meaning, beyond themselves.

### *Assertions of Relevant Similarity*

Should someone argue

The method I propose worked last year (and this problem is similar to the one we had last year), so it will work again.[17](#)

one is presuming not only that the problem this year shares one or more attributes with last year's problem (in which case the assertion of similarity might very well be a description, if the attributes were extensional), but that these attributes are nomically connected with successfully resolving some problem. What is presumed supports the subjunctive conditional:

If a situation were to share these factors, then the proposed solution would be effective.

Hence, at least some comparisons are interpretations under our understanding of the concept. Developing this point further is beyond the scope of this paper.[18](#)

We thus see that at least three central types of interpretations discussed by rhetoricians-causal statements, attributions of significance, and comparisons in the sense of assertions of relevant similarity-can be seen as intentional statements in that they are structurally related to subjunctive conditionals. We may identify a number of other types of interpretations, such as dispositional statements, legal statements, ascriptions of responsibility,

ascriptions of interpretive necessity and possibility, statements of alternatives or disjunctions or dilemmas. In each case, we can see how positive instances of such statements support subjunctive conditionals or how the subjunctive conditional itself may be used to express such statements.

### *Classification of Statements and Premise Acceptability*















We remarked at the beginning of this paper that descriptions seemed straightforward while interpretations involved an air of controversiality. We thus suggested that our classification scheme for statements was relevant to the issue of premise acceptability. We can now develop why. Consider descriptions. We have said that they are contingent, extensional statements. Setting aside issues of testimony or taking someone else's word, how would we come to believe a contingent, extensional statement? What cognitive mechanism would generate a belief expressible by such a statement? Clearly, the issue would concern whether the belief concerned an event or object in the external world or an internal event or occurrence such as a toothache. In the former case, our belief would be the result of perception; in the latter, of introspection. But there is a presumption in favor of perception. Until or unless we have evidence that our perceptual belief-generating mechanism is not functioning properly, we may presume that it is and there is thus also a presumption in favor of the beliefs it generates. Our description that there is a red apple on the window sill is straightforward because as a perceptual belief there is a presumption for it. The presumption is even stronger for our introspective beliefs, for we are directly aware of our internal states. We are directly aware of the pain we feel and the claim that we are currently experiencing a toothache should be beyond doubt, for us at least.


Necessary statements are the province of the reason, which is the belief-generating mechanism here. But are not such beliefs, truths of reason, either immediately self-evident or subject to necessary demonstration? Again, not only is there a presumption for reason as a belief-generating mechanism, when the deliverances of reason are manifestly self-evident it seems this presumption cannot be undercut. Again, the issue of statement classification has proved relevant to the issue of acceptability.

Contrast these two cases with evaluations. Since evaluations are frequently the subject of dispute, it would seem that there is an air of controversiality about such claims. But how are evaluative beliefs generated? This is a sizable question which we believe involves examining different types of value, intrinsic, deontic, aretaic separately. However, we can here note this telling point: If someone had no capacity for feeling, would that person be able to form value judgments? If one quite literally felt no attraction to pleasure, virtue, knowledge or repulsion towards pain, vice, or wanton ignorance could that person have any values? We do not understand how and thus argue that feeling is intimately connected to the mechanism or mechanisms generating evaluative beliefs. But is there a presumption for feeling? That is not among the faculties which are generally regarded as having presumptions. Again, consider interpretations, in particular causal statements. We may come to believe some causal claims through an intuitive apprehension of some connection between events or their attributes. Such an intuitive apprehension should lead us to regard the apprehended connection as an hypothesis, subject to test. But this is significant. There is not a presumption for intuition by itself. At best there is a presumption for intuited beliefs that have been subjected to test. But such beliefs are not basic. If confirmed, we have the results of the tests to justify them, to constitute premises from which to argue for them. So recognizing that a belief is an interpretation is quite relevant to recognizing whether or not it is acceptable as a basic premise. There is not a presumption for the mechanism which generated it and thus our sense that there was an air of controversiality about interpretations seems well placed. The issue of statement classification then is quite relevant to the issue of premise acceptability.

We have thus given a philosophical explication of certain distinctions from stasis theory. We have explicated how we may distinguish descriptions, interpretations, evaluations, and necessary statements. We have also sketched how recognizing that a statement is a member of one of these classes is relevant to deciding whether it is an acceptable basic premise. The rhetorical issue of stasis theory then is connected with one of the central issues in the theory of argumentation. When we evaluate an argument, at least from the logical point of view, we want to know whether the premises are acceptable and whether they are adequately connected to the conclusion. Do they constitute grounds relevant to the conclusion and sufficient for accepting it? Does the argument suffice to transfer the presumption for the premises to the conclusion? This presupposes that *there is* a presumption for the premises. To determine that issue, or at least to be able to explain why there is a presumption, we may do well to point out what types of statements constitute the premises.


### Notes

1. It is on the basis of Sproule's discussion that we incorporated this distinction into both editions of our *Thinking Logically*. 
2. Sproule, [1980], p. 18. 
3. Sproule, [1980], p. 18. 
4. Sproule, [1980], p. 18. 
5. Sproule, [1980], p. 70. 
6. Fahnestock and Secor, [1982], p. 9. 
7. Fahnestock and Secor, [1982], pp. 209-10. 
8. Kruger, [1975], p. 137. 
9. Kruger, [1975], pp. 137-38. 
10. Kruger, [1975], p. 138. 
11. Kruger, [1975], p. 156, n6. 
12. Quine, [1970], p. 72. 
13. Rokeach, [1968], p. 5, quoted in Sproule, [1980], p. 184. 
14. For further discussion of the distinction between accidental and nomic universals and its implications for identifying laws of nature, see Ernest Nagel, [1961], pp. 49-52. We are heavily indebted to Nagel's discussion here. 

15. We hope that the parallelism between these three classes of interpretations and van Eemeren and Grootendorst's three basic argumentation schemes-symp-tomatic, analogous, and causal is apparent. We might think of these interpretations as warrants or as associated conditionals of the inference rules for arguments instanting these three argumentation schemes. (See [1992], pp. 94-102.) 

16. Compare Lewis, [1973], p. 2, for a contrast of 'would' and 'might' counterfactuals. 

17. Example in van Eemeren and Grootendorst, [1992], p. 97. 

18. But we wish to point out that Sproule specifically considers comparisons as one type of interpretation ([1980], 146-51), and Fahnestock and Secor also discuss this type of statement ([1982], pp. 99-112). 

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