Type 1 and Type 2 statements

In many discussions we see the use of “objective” and “subjective” to characterize what people claim. For example: “His claim about the number of immigrants was objective, but his feeling was subjective.”

But let me offer another way of thinking about “objective” and “subjective” statements. When a statement about conditions, things and states in the world let’s call them Type 1 statements. When an expression is about conditions that appear to be private to the speaker, let’s call them Type 2. By Type 2, I mean expressions of feelings, (e.g. sad) attitudes, (e.g. likes and preferences) bodily sensations (e.g. pain and pleasure)

We need to be clear that not all first-person statements are Type 2.
For example, “I am six feet tall”: This would be a Type 1 statement since it is about a person in the world. This would contrast with; “I feel six feet tall.”

And of course, third person statements are made on the basis of Type 2 but are statements of Type 1: e.g. “He is in pain” said after “Ouch”

What follows is a primer language that we can use for our work in this class:

A. Descriptive (including what we call Type 1): Claims we make about the world that lend themselves to some quantitative measure or direct observation. This includes claims that something is true about the world. Examples include; writing instructions (different from giving instructions—see below), defining, clarifying, explaining, answering questions.

B. Interrogative: Asking questions, inquiring, seeking information, wondering, puzzling, etc.

C. Prescriptive: Expressions that call for some action; giving commands, advice, guidance, directions, issuing warnings.[[1]](#footnote-1)

D. Expressive (including what we called earlier, Type 2): Using language to reveal personal states and attitudes; cheering, cursing, venting, and muttering and uttering. There are examples in this category that look a bit like Type 1 statements, e.g. “I have a headache,” “I am feeling joyous,” These words often substitute for the expressive utterance “Ouch” and “Wow.” Some have thought that since the expression cannot be mistaken, the expression is therefore certain. Underlying this view is the claim that having the experience involves having the belief and since the experience is not mistaken, the belief is certain. A belief that has no dimension of uncertainty is a very odd idea, but we can discuss this as a matter of philosophy.

E. Normative (including what we called earlier Type 1 value): Claims of value, including practical value (useful-worthless), aesthetic value, (beautiful-ugly), human moral value (honest-mendacious), functional value (healthy-sick), financial value (you can earn 5%--inflation is higher than the interest), intrinsic value (parental love-child abuse)

F. Argumentative: Using language to influence, persuade, and convince through reasons. Reasons can appear in arguments that support both descriptive theses and normative/prescriptive theses. Moreover, these reasons can be a mixture of descriptive statements and normative statements in either kind of argument.

Category F is a different level from the others in the list in that it uses all the other categories with the exception of D. When the expression is only Type D, reasons are inappropriate. To ask of a person who has just uttered, “Ouch”, “Why?” is out of place.

Category B is also at a different level from the others is so far as we can ask questions answered by A claims, as well as C, E and perhaps D. We can ask questions about the way the world is at several different levels. Compare, “How many SUV’s are on the road?” with “Are SUV’s trucks or cars?”; “How many Republicans are in the state Senate?” with is "Trump a true conservative?”; “How many don’t have access to health care?” with “Is access to health care a right?” We call these last questions, questions of concept which require defining (claims in category A and perhaps E).

We also have questions of analysis; “Is outsourcing causing overall job loss?”, “Will cutting taxes to the well-off improve the economic growth rate?”; “Will banning assault weapons reduce mass shooting?” Answers generally are Type 1 category A, C and E.

1. And here things can get murky. “I hope tomorrow will be warmer” is by all accounts and expression of type D. Donald Trump said the following to then FBI director James Comey,” I hope you will let the General Flynn issue go”. There is a case to be made for being type C and we might call this a pure semantic debate. Compare “I expect you to do your duty” with “I anticipate that you will do your duty.” "England expects that every man will do his duty" [↑](#footnote-ref-1)