

Vicki
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Part 3

The Psychology of Fact and Fiction
(1951)

A. Man's Nature and the Nature of Facts

Facts are what men agree to consider non-values. (Why do A and B call a stone a stone? Because they share a value - the desire for consensus on indifferent matters.) Note the significant case of the adolescent who disagrees on every³thing, including facts.

A fact as a factual statement is one viewpoint. Most philosophers, especially moderns, e.g. R. B. Perry, like to talk of factual statements as describing conditions.

A fact, from another view, gets its most useful meaning from some conception of what reality is. So long as we think of fact as fact statement, contrasted e.g. with value as value statement, we shall be only semanticists. The use of factual statement to denote a fact is a logical convention growing out of the age of scientism. It allows many useful manipulations of data but should be regarded as in the nature of a mathematical or logical symbol, which puts certain statements in relation to our statements, thus allowing further logical or mathematical developments of observed utility.

Going beyond fact as fact statement one can begin by asserting the meaning of this convention. If we use fact

statements, there is utility in the formulation. This utility comes from the practical abstraction or fiction. The fiction is itself necessary because we see fit not to confound certain meanings - of emotion, of declaration, of conditions, of value-judgments, etc.

But, this fiction should not preclude our investigation into a meaning of fact other than the logical one. This new meaning of fact must be searched for in man's nature and development, and hence in the nature of values.

Originally, of course, the distinction between fact and value is absent. To the infant, and to many adults in effect, what is true, and what is true is good or, better perhaps, what is good is true, and is.

The infant is occupied with "discovering" (we say) the world apart from himself. Alternatively he is separating the world from himself. The world, first, is I; then certain parts of the world remain I while other parts swin off into uncontrolled behavior. It is possible that the mental operations of the infant at this point consist of separating what is uncoltrollable (the non-I) and bad, from what is controllable (the I) and good. There is a junction of the I and the good: first, by definition (let us say), since no external apparatus for judging events good or bad exists and good is primarily identified with indulgences; and secondly, because "control" in early life is in fact defined as indulgence and what the infant regards as uncontrolled is in fact "bad" for him. The warmth, food, and stimulation of erogenous

skin and oral areas are the great good and true and I. Cold, hunger, and unexpected movement are bad and not-I and untrue.

The criterion for admission of an outside event to category of the I, the loved, and the true is control. The criterion for exclusion of the non-I, the unloved, and the false is uncontrol. At first, the elements or content of the I are most primitive; they include those perceptions of the body that immediately continue the state of the body in the womb. Later on, the content of the I expands through perception by other sense organs - eyes, ears, and nose, and a busy period of sensing ensues. What one feels becomes distinguished from what one tastes, sees, hears, etc. but the distinctions are still control versus uncontrol, good versus bad.^{1/}

Certain universal criteria of cognition are in effect established very early. Repetition of events is expected, and the repetition may be good or bad - quantitative general -

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In order to localize an external stimulus, the sense-data must be referred to a general cortical area to provide a general body image (33-4). A word incites a pattern (the basis of logic), 12,000,000,000 brain cells out of which patterns can be made. Also patterns exist in time (as memory). The ego finds its own body in infancy. Body and non-body are perhaps operationally defined by the brain as "separableness". What is separable is non-body. Otherwise many similarities between external and internal sensations and brain develops system for intelligizing both.

ization has begun. Validity is tested (and established as a useful tool) by the testing of the environment and of the self. A cry, an upward turn of the head, a stretch -- these may not be reliable but they have effects and presumably may be tested deliberately as manipulative tactics. It is possible that all early behavior is manipulative either in what has been termed an instructive sense or deliberately as tactic. Reflection is a testing of control - or as the pragmatists closely describe it - a response to frustration (by putting it in such a way, however, even the pragmatists allow reflection or thinking to become an isolated concept that can mislead). There is no such thing here as fact divorced from desire, or as fact statement. Fact and fact statements come later, if at all, as formal depictions of a process essentially manipulative or instrumental.

Consequently, the useful theory of science whereby the world is constructed of facts, and ^{where} in order to get what we want, we compose applied or manipulative statements that direct our behavior, is to be used cautiously in interpreting human nature. It's utility is confined to its specific scientific milieu. It deludes us when we use it to discuss basic connections of fact and value.

B. Man's Nature and the nature of fictions

The crucial place of the study of "fictions" in the study of interrelationships between "reality" and "values" has scarcely been understood. The only considerable study of "fictions" is Hans Vaihinger's Philosophy of 'As If'.

Bentham's theory of fiction~~is~~ is relatively superficial. Indeed Vaihunger's too is excessively formal, non-developmental, and non-empirical. Hence he, like others, misses the great lessons to draw from the developmental analysis of fictions and the deductions about fictions that can come from an appreciation of instrumentalist or pragmatist philosophy.

To clarify the role of fictions, let us try to imagine the "rationalistic" condition in which the intellect and the emotions are separate and have separate functions. Then the former "tells" the latter what to do according to logical - empirical procedures. And, with this system, the use of fiction is to furnish justification for a course of action to social operators - theologians, political propagandists, lawyers, and others. Fictions then can be treated as "good" by "conservatives" or "bad" by reformers. This is the superficial and unwholesome theory of fictions as ~~it~~ finds its way into much philosophical and doctrinal porse.

Now take our own theory of values and facts, to wit, that values and facts are developmentally and operationally the same, and that significantly different doses of each in a given event are what make the event a "value" or a fact. What role does fiction play here? Is a fiction necessary? Or at least necessary to the philosophical system (granted it to be necessary in social affairs)?

Fictions are necessary in a philosophical explanation of man and nature. For, fictions are the recognized overlaps between value and fact not explainable in vulgar theory. Vulgar theory is confused. An "ought" is to be taken as an "is". Why? Because action is referred towards the confusing event. Thus: ~~Man's~~ Man's actions are determined;

"A" commits crime; Vulgate wish to punish "A's" Man's actions are voluntary (the fiction).

Or to take another example, lest critics say that I am posing a true inflexible reality to the "fact" men's actions are determined: Men lack hope for the future: their values are negative; "A" desires not to work any more; Vulgate wish "A" to work; "A" is told that "work is the way to hope and salvation." The last statement is factual, predictive but is also a fiction, this time one usually inspects fact into value rather than value into fact.

So we say that whenever fact disputes value or vice-versa, a fiction is called for, and a fiction is nothing but a social form of recognition of the basic point we make in our philosophy of facts and values, namely that neither stands by itself and there is no fact that excludes value or a value that excludes fact. That is, the very existence of fictions substantiates our theory.

Social history has supplied the third sex in cases where a separation of the two sexes of fact and value cannot be maintained. The same instrumental turn of mind that separates the unseparable calls for a device to negate the separation in crucial instances.

Let us distinguish the fictional event more closely:

A fiction occurs when:

- a) A factual condition exists: i.e. event X is universally agreed to.
- b) A value condition exists: i.e. event Y is effectively desired by controlling doctrine, i.e. Y = imagined, desired condition.

c) X is normally accompanied by excitation of Y .

d) X is contradicted by Y.

e) X is part of a larger body of events, the integral consistency of which is attested to and upheld by controlling doctrine; hence, X cannot be denied.

f) Therefore, Y is stated to be the official description of X, and the machinery of officers ^{and} of doctrine assure the enforcement of this ruling, and when possible, the suppression of the evidence of contradiction.

g) A variant expression of Y thereupon becomes the fiction.

Are there other varieties of fictions than these that most call "practical" fictions?

q) Faith?

r) Scientific abstraction? or hypothesis?

s) Falsehoods?

No, contrary to Vaihinger and most others. Faith and abstractions are both values, though they possess basic psychological differences. The first ^{is} being an affirmation of a state of being as incontestably desirable, the second ^{is} being a controlled and willful output of value statements already known to be potentially within the existing factual order.

Falsehoods are accidental or intentional deviations from the rules of the factual orders caused by involuntary or voluntary valuations or non-conformity to the factual order. A falsehood, too, may be an attempt to establish a fiction and is called a falsehood because the social environment

rejects the implied value. That is, the value does not have the social force to elevate the falsehood to the order of a fiction.

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Some examples of fictions and "as ifs"

Fiction = all signs; all contradictions between values internally; all

Distinguish: fictions/values/signs/theories

How much does action depend upon fictions?

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