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Distinguishing Between Conceptual Versus Empirical (/hcwe/hwac/teaching-support/disciplinary-writing-hwac/philosophy/conceptual-vs-empirical/index.html)

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Distinguishing Between Descriptive Versus Normative Statements (/hcwe/hwac/teaching-support/disciplinary-writing-hwac/philosophy/descriptive-vs-normative/index.html)

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Thought Experiments (/hcwe/hwac/teaching-support/disciplinary-writing-hwac/philosophy/thought-experiments/index.html)

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A Sample Annotated Paper (Sarte) (/hcwe/hwac/teaching-support/disciplinary-writing-hwac/philosophy/sample-annotated-paper/index.html)

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## Distinguishing Between Descriptive Versus Normative Statements

A description is just what you think it is: It describes a situation or what a philosopher might call a state of affairs. For example, "The car is red," "The river is flowing quickly," "I'm sad that my juicer is broken," "Brutus killed Caesar." A normative statement is a claim about how things ought to be. For example, "Jazz is better than pop music," "If you want to pass the exam you should study," "Killing an innocent person is wrong." The point here is to see that there is a difference between descriptive claims and normative claims. The question of whether normative judgments are anything more than opinion is a question that philosophers debate and discuss. This distinction is sometimes also referred to as the "is/ought" distinction or the "descriptive/prescriptive" distinction. An additional example is below:

Descriptive Claim	Normative Claim
No one knows what happens after death.	No one should fear death.