

บทความพิเศษ

“เพียงแต่ข้อเท็จจริง”¹

“Just the Facts”²

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บทคัดย่อ

ส่วนที่ 1 ของบทความนี้พิจารณารากศัพท์ของคำว่า "ข้อเท็จจริง" รวมถึงพิจารณาว่ามีการใช้คำว่า "ข้อเท็จจริง" ที่เป็นมาตรฐานหรือไม่ คำถามที่ว่า "อะไรคือความหมายของคำว่า "ข้อเท็จจริง" ไม่สามารถตอบได้อย่างได้ข้อสรุปโดยอาศัยภาษาสามัญ เพราะไม่มีข้อตกลงร่วมกันระหว่างนักพจนานุกรม กระนั้นแล้วก็ยังมีคำถามที่คงสามารถถกเถียงกันได้ว่าแนวทางการใช้ภาษาร่วมกันควรจะเป็นที่ยอมรับว่ามีความเพียงพอสำหรับทฤษฎีทางปรัชญาเกี่ยวกับ "ข้อเท็จจริง" หรือไม่ ส่วนที่ 2 เริ่มจากความเห็นที่ว่าในภาววิทยาของรัสเซลในช่วงปรมาณูนิยม เขาแยกแยะระหว่าง "ข้อเท็จจริงเชิงปฏิฐาน" และ "ข้อเท็จจริงเชิงนิเสธ" อย่างไรก็ตาม รัสเซลยังคงยืนยันเช่นนั้นเพราะเขาต้องการอธิบายความผิดพลาดและเชื่อว่าการยึดถือว่ามี "ข้อเท็จจริงเชิงนิเสธ" จะช่วยได้ แรมซีพยายามแก้ปัญหานี้แต่ก็สำเร็จเพียงแค่เปลี่ยนถ่ายปัญหาไปให้เป็นเรื่องของประพจน์ นั่นเป็นเพราะว่าแรมซียืนยันว่า "ข้อเท็จจริง" มีฐานะเดียวกับ "ประพจน์ที่จริง" โดยไม่ได้ให้คำอธิบายเชิงปรัชญาเกี่ยวกับ "ประพจน์ที่จริง" วิทเกินสไตน์ให้คำอธิบายเชิงลดทอนเกี่ยวกับ "ข้อเท็จจริง" โดยยืนยันว่าข้อเท็จจริงเป็นการจัดเรียงของวัตถุซึ่งเป็นองค์ประกอบพื้นฐานของโลก มีข้อเสนอแนะว่าทัศนะของวิทเกินสไตน์ใน *Tractatus* นั้นยอมรับไม่ได้เนื่องจากข้อเท็จจริงต้องอาศัยกรอบทฤษฎีและข้อเท็จจริงต่าง ๆ ไม่สามารถอยู่ในความว่างเปล่าอันไร้บริบทได้ พิทเซอร์เสนอข้อถกเถียงต่อทัศนะยุคต้นของวิทเกินสไตน์เช่นกัน โดยกล่าวว่าวิธีการแบ่งโลกเป็นส่วน ๆ ของเรานั้นเป็นไปโดยปราศจากพื้นฐานรองรับ ออสตินและสตรอร์สันได้เขียนเกี่ยวกับข้อเท็จจริง ดูเหมือนว่าการอ้างเหตุผลของออสตินจะมีความสมเหตุสมผลเชิงรูปนัย แต่ยังคงทวนคำถามอยู่ และการอ้างเหตุผลของสตรอร์สันไม่สามารถสนับสนุนทัศนะ

¹ ได้รับรางวัลบทความดีเด่น (ประเภทบุคคลทั่วไป) ในการประชุมวิชาการประจำปีครั้งที่ 22 ของสมาคมปรัชญาและศาสนาแห่งประเทศไทย ระหว่างวันที่ 20-21 ธันวาคม พ.ศ.2561 กรุงเทพมหานคร

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ที่ว่ามีความแตกต่างของประเภทพื้นฐานเชิงตรรกะระหว่างข้อเท็จจริงและสิ่งที่ดำรงอยู่ในโน้มนัการ์แนป (เช่นเดียวกับดูคัสส์) กล่าวว่าเราสามารถอธิบายข้อเท็จจริงว่าเป็นสิ่งที่อ้างถึงประพจน์เชิงวัตถุวิสัยโดยไม่ต้องให้ความกระจ่างว่านี่หมายความว่าอะไร ไวท์เสนอว่าข้อเท็จจริงไม่ใช่ทั้งองค์ประกอบที่ไม่อยู่ในรูปภาษาของโลก หรือข้อความที่เป็นจริง อย่างไรก็ตาม การอ้างเหตุผลของเขาไม่ได้ข้อสรุป และยังมีความสับสนในประเด็นสำคัญข้อหนึ่ง ส่วนที่ 3 เสนอว่าความผิดพลาดร่วมกันในบรรดาการวิเคราะห์ข้างต้นซึ่งปะปนข้อเท็จจริงกับสิ่งที่ดำรงอยู่ในโลกหรือ "ประพจน์ที่จริง" ก็คือความล้มเหลวที่จะเน้นย้ำว่าข้อเท็จจริงเป็นเพียงข้อเท็จจริงภายในกรอบหนึ่ง ๆ อย่างไรก็ตาม แม้แต่ประโยคสังเกตุการณ์เชิงข้อเท็จจริง (เช่น "โต๊ะตัวนี้มีสีน้ำตาล" ซึ่งพูดโดยหมายถึงโต๊ะสีน้ำตาลตัวหนึ่ง) ยังมีฐานคติถึงกรอบของภาษาที่คำของภาษานั้นแบ่งความเป็นจริงออกเป็นส่วน ๆ ในลักษณะหนึ่งแทนที่จะเป็นในอีกลักษณะ อาจแบ่งกรอบออกได้เป็นสามประเภท 1) โครงสร้างภาษา 2) โครงสร้างความเชื่อเชิงทฤษฎี 3) โครงสร้างประสบการณ์ โอนลกล่าวถึงโครงสร้างแบบที่สองในงานเรื่อง *Fact and Theory* ซึ่งเขากล่าวว่า เช่นที่ทฤษฎีไม่สามารถปลอดจากข้อเท็จจริง ข้อเท็จจริงที่มีนัยสำคัญก็ไม่อาจปราศจากทฤษฎี

Abstract

Part I of this paper considers the etymology of "fact" and also whether or not there is any standard usage of "fact". The question, "what is meant by "fact" cannot be definitively answered by appeal to ordinary language, because there is no universal agreement among lexicographers. Even so, it would still remain a debatable question as to whether common usage should be accepted as adequate for a philosophical theory of fact. Part II opens with the comment that in the ontology of Russell's atomistic period, he distinguishes between "positive facts" and "negative facts". Rosenberg is among those, including Russell's students at Harvard, who rejected Russell's distinction and the meaning of "negative facts." However, Russell persisted because he wanted to account for error and believed that only by postulating "negative facts" could that be done. Ramsey tried to solve the problem, but only succeeded in passing the problem along to "propositions". That's because Ramsey asserted that "fact" is equivalent to "true proposition" without providing a philosophical account of "true proposition". Wittgenstein provides a reductionistic account of "facts" by asserting that facts are configurations of objects which are the ultimate constituents of the world. It is suggested that Wittgenstein's Tractatus view is unacceptable since fact requires a matrix of theory

and facts do not exist in a context-free void. Pitcher has argued also against this early view of Wittgenstein's by saying that the way in which one divides up the world is to some extent arbitrary. Austin and Strawson have argued in print about facts. It seems that Austin's argument is formally valid but question begging, and Strawson's argument has failed to make a case out for the view that there is a logically fundamental type difference between facts and things-in-the-world. Like Strawson, Carnap does think facts are things-in-the-world. Carnap (like Ducasse) says we can explain fact as referring to an objective proposition without clarifying what that would be like. White argues that facts are neither non-linguistic constituents of the world nor just true statements. However, his arguments are inconclusive, and on one main point, just confused. Part III argues that the common mistake in all those analyses that conflate fact into thing-in-the-world or "true proposition" on the other is consists in a failure to emphasize that a fact is only a fact within a given matrix. However, even factual observation sentences (e.g., 'the table is brown' uttered in reference to a brown table) presuppose the matrix of a language in which its words divide reality up in certain ways rather than in alternative ways. Three sorts of matrices may be distinguished: 1) language structures, 2) theoretical belief structures, and 3) experiential structures. Matrix-type 2) was noted by O'Neil in *Fact and Theory* when he claimed that just as theories cannot afford to be completely a-factual so facts when significant are not a-theoretical.

Since writers on the meaning of 'fact' have sometimes argued that their conception is correct because it accords with ordinary language usage while rival conceptions do not, an obvious starting point is consideration of etymology and of whether or not there is any standard usage of 'fact'. This issue will be dealt with in part I. In part II a review of several philosophically important conceptions of 'fact' will be given, along with some critical comments. In part III I conclude by stating what I believe can be inferred from this philosophical investigation about fact in relation to theory.

I

In English 'fact' has meant: 1) "a thing done," 2) "the making, doing, or performing," 3) "something that has really occurred or is actually the case; something certainly known to be of

this character; hence a particular truth known by actual observation or authentic testimony, as opposed to what is merely inferred ...” and 4) “something that is alleged to be or conceivably might be, a ‘fact’.”³ Of these the first two are classed as archaic by the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED).

It is true, as Austin points out, that the usage of ‘fact that’ -- on which Strawson relies heavily -- is a relatively recent phenomenon. Although usage of ‘fact that’ occurred as early as 1803, it has only more recently come into prominence. It was mentioned in the 1972 OED, but not in the 1961 version.⁴

The sense of ‘fact’ as a thing done has its origin in the Latin ‘factum’ which means “that which is done, a deed, act, exploit, achievement.”⁵ This sense survives in only a few phrases, such as ‘after the fact,’ and the *Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology* suggests that this sense is archaic and that ‘after the fact’ is now only a legal usage.⁶ On the other hand *Webster’s Dictionary* (1970) has listed fact as deed without considering it archaic. Thus it seems clear that the problem of what is meant by ‘fact’ will not be solved sheerly by an appeal to ordinary usage, for even the lexicographers are not in agreement as to whether an important sense of ‘fact’ is ordinary or archaic. But even if there were a common usage, it would still be a moot issue as to whether it should be accepted as adequate for a philosophical theory of fact.

II

In the ontology of Russell’s atomistic period, facts are what propositions refer to. “Just as a word has meaning,” he writes, “so a proposition has an objective reference.”⁷ Of facts Russell distinguishes two kinds:

³ Examples from the OED of the respective senses listed are: 1) (1745) “At length he committed a Fact that completed the Destruction of himself and all his family.” 2) (1768) “I caught him in the fact.” 3) (1632) “They resolved that the Admirall should goe disguised ... to assure himselfe of the fact.” 4) (1842) “This is, as usual, a false fact, supported by a supposed motive.” Source: *Oxford English Dictionary* (1961), vol. IV, 11 – 12.

⁴ *A supplement to the Oxford English Dictionary* (1972), vol. I, 1015.

⁵ *Harper’s Latin Dictionary*, ed. E.A. Andrews (New York, 1907), 718.

⁶ *Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology*, ed. C.T. Onions (Oxford University Press, 1966), 341.

⁷ Bertrand Russell, *The Analysis of Mind*, (London: George Allen And Unwin, 1921), 271.

“‘Socrates loves Plato’ and ‘Napoleon does not love Wellington’ are facts which have opposite forms. We will call the form of ‘Socrates loves Plato’ *positive* and the form of ‘Napoleon does not love Wellington’ *negative*. So long as we confine ourselves to atomic facts ... the distinction between positive and negative facts is easily made.”⁸

In a parallel way, propositions are distinguished: “Word propositions ... are of two kinds, one verified by a positive objective, the other by a negative objective.”⁹

In the discussion section printed after “The Philosophy of Logical Atomism” Russell, ordinarily articulate, rivals a philosophical recluse in conciseness to the point of obscurity. For example, when someone asked regarding a sentence “Does putting the ‘not’ into it give it a formal character of negative and vice versa?” Russell replied “No, I think you must go into the meaning of words.” As Rosenberg has pointed out, however, Russell never tells us *how* we are to go into the meaning of the words.¹⁰ Moreover, Russell admits that ‘negative fact’ cannot be defined, and that there is no formal test for distinguishing negative propositions from positive ones.¹¹

In spite of such unresolved questions Russell nevertheless felt it imperative to postulate negative facts in order to account for error. He writes:

“A thing cannot be false except because of a fact, so that you find it extremely difficult to say exactly what happens when you make a positive assertion that is false, unless you are going to admit negative facts.”¹²

But if there is no clear way to distinguish negative facts from positive ones, such an account remains unconvincing. It is not surprising that, as Russell says:

⁸ Bertrand Russell, “On Propositions,” in R.C. Marsh (Ed.), *Logic and Knowledge* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1956), 287.

⁹ Bertrand Russell, “On Propositions,” 317.

¹⁰ Jay F. Rosenberg, “Russell on Negative Facts,” *Nous* 6,1 (1972): 29.

¹¹ Bertrand Russell, “The Philosophy of Logical Atomism,” *The Monist*, 29 (1919), 47.

¹² Bertrand Russell, “The Philosophy of Logical Atomism,” 46.

“When I was lecturing on the subject at Harvard I argued that there were negative facts, and it nearly produced a riot: the class would not hear of there being negative facts at all.”¹³

Russell’s influence on Ramsey is considerable. But while Russell seems to have held that facts are perceived in a sensory way, as events, Ramsey argues against this view.¹⁴ He suggests, rather, that facts are true propositions” In his paper “Facts and Propositions” Ramsey states:

The connection between the event which was the death of Caesar and the fact that Caesar died is, in my opinion, this: ‘That Caesar died’ is really an existential proposition, asserting the existence of an event of a certain sort, thus resembling ‘Italy has a King,’ which asserts the existence of a man of a certain sort. The event which is of that sort is called the death of Caesar, and should no more be confused with the fact Caesar died than the king of Italy should be confused with the fact that Italy has a King.¹⁵

One problem with Ramsey’s account of facts is that it involves passing the buck to propositions. For on this analysis fact turns out to be identical with true proposition, yet we are left in the dark as to what a proposition is. It is ironic that in a paper entitled “Facts and Proposition” (in *Foundations of Mathematics*) we should find that facts *are* propositions of a certain sort (true ones), and yet find no account of what a proposition is.¹⁶

Wittgenstein says of facts in the *Tractatus*:

- 1.2 The world divides into facts.
- 2 What is the case -- a fact -- is the existence of states of affairs.
 - 2.01 A state of affairs (a state of things) is a combination of objects (things).

¹³ Bertrand Russell, “The Philosophy of Logical Atomism,” 42.

¹⁴ Frank P. Ramsey, *The Foundations of Mathematics* (London: Kegan Paul, 1931), 139-41.

¹⁵ Frank P. Ramsey, *The Foundations of Mathematics*, 141.

¹⁶ For the discussion of some of the difficulties involved in the notion of proposition see George Pitcher, “Propositions and the Correspondence Theory of Truth” in J.F. Rosenberg and C. Travis (Eds.), *Philosophy of Language* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1971), 223-233.

This view of facts involves a kind of reductionism which assumes that facts are ultimate constituents of the world. In Part III it will be suggested that fact requires matrix and does not exist in a context-free void. If so and if Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* view is that there is a single set of facts into which the world divides up, then his view on this point must be rejected. As Pitcher has noted in his commentary on Wittgenstein, the way in which one divides up the world is to some extent arbitrary.¹⁷

Austin and Strawson have had lively interchange about the meaning of 'fact'. In his paper, "Unfair to Facts." Austin singles out two main contentions of Strawson's with which he disagrees: (I) that there is a logically fundamental type-difference between facts and things-in-the-world, and (II) that 'corresponds with the facts' is an idiom, not to be taken literally.¹⁸

In support of (I) Strawson states:

What 'makes the statement' that the cat has mange true is not the cat, but the condition of the cat, i.e. the fact that the cat has mange. The only plausible candidate for the position of what (in the world) makes the statement true is the fact it states; but the fact it states is not something in the world.¹⁹

To this Austin counters (1) that the conditions of the cat is a fact; (2) that the condition of the cat is something-in-the-world. From which it follows that a fact is something-in-the-world. And in regard to (II) Austin claims that Strawson has given no satisfactory argument.

Much can be said on both sides of this debate. Austin's argument above is formally valid but given what he means by 'condition' to assume (1) is tantamount to assuming an answer to the question at issue. On the other side, what evidence is there for supposing a logically fundamental type-difference (I)? As our etymological inquiry showed, fact was -- and occasionally still is -- viewed as in the world.

Like Strawson, Carnap does not regard facts as things-in-the-world. Unlike him, Carnap is wary of making stark assertions about the nature of fact. In *Meaning and Necessity* he observes:

¹⁷ George Pitcher, *The Philosophy of Wittgenstein*, (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1964), 173.

¹⁸ J.L. Austin, *Philosophical papers*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), 102.

¹⁹ P.F. Strawson, "Truth," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* Supplementary Volume xxiv, 135.

Since the term 'fact' in its ordinary use is occasionally vague and often ambiguous, there is some freedom of choice left as to how to turn it into an exact technical term, in other words, how to explicate it. I am inclined to think, like Ducasse, that it would not deviate too much from customary usage if we were to explicate the term 'fact' as referring to a certain kind of proposition (in our objective sense of the word).²⁰

But what is this "objective sense"? Carnap says that 'proposition' is "used neither for linguistic expression nor for a subjective, mental occurrence, but rather for something objective that may or may not be exemplified in nature....We apply the term 'proposition' to any entities of a certain logical type, namely, those that may expressed by (declarative) sentences in a language."²¹

Carnap's account of 'fact' has the characteristic difficulty of those accounts which purport to explain 'fact' in terms of something else which is in at least as great a need of explanation. Does Carnap suppose that fact is objective in the sense of existing apart from mind, so that facts exist when not being considered? If so, how would we come to know that facts exist in this way? Another difficulty is recognized by Carnap himself. Like Russell, he sees a problem in explicating the relationship between proposition and fact in the case of false propositions. So in conclusion he states:

"If anyone is in doubt as to whether there are any nonmental and extra-linguistic entities which fulfil these conditions, he may take as propositions certain linguistic entities which do so."²²

As against all of the foregoing White argues that facts are neither non-linguistic constituents of the world nor true statements simpliciter. In arguing against the conception of 'fact' as non-linguistic entity White emphasises the view that facts are atemporal and not in the world:

Facts, unlike objects, cannot be created or destroyed, pointed to or avoided. We cannot be overtaken by, involved in, or predict facts as we can events. We can find ourselves

²⁰ Rudolph Carnap, *Meaning and Necessity*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956), 28.

²¹ Rudolph Carnap, *Meaning and Necessity*, 27.

²² Rudolph Carnap, *Meaning and Necessity*, 32.

in, transform, or be rescued from nasty, serious, or ticklish situations, but not facts. Facts, unlike states of affairs, do not begin, last, or end. Although there *are* innumerable facts, facts, unlike situations or states of affairs, don't exist.²³

Thus White concludes that facts are not things-in-the-world, and proceeds to argue that they are not the same as true statements. But in his second counter-argument to show that facts do not collapse into true statements, it is tacitly assumed that facts are things-in-the-world. He writes:

A second argument alleges that facts, like true statements, are linked only by logical relations, e.g., that facts imply each other. On the contrary, facts, unlike true statements, have causal effects. It was the fact, not the true statement, that the train was diverted which made me late for my lecture.²⁴

Now it seems that by saying that facts have causal effects, White must admit that they are in the world. Otherwise he would owe us an account of some peculiar causality whereby the supposed immaterial entity, fact, can cause effects in the world, an account which has not been given. Thus there seems to be some confusion here, for White previously argues that facts are not things-in-the-world.

III

I would like to suggest that the common mistake in all those analyses which telescope 'fact' into 'thing-in-the-world' on the one hand, or into 'true proposition,' 'true sentence,' etc. on the other, consists in a failure to emphasize that a fact is only a fact within a given matrix. Austin, for example, ignores the role of the discriminating interpretive intelligence in its acceptance of a matrix within which facts emerge when he supposes that facts are in the world objectively as things-in-the-world. Likewise, those who argue that 'fact' collapses into 'true proposition' etc. seem to suppose a non-metaphysical realm of raw fact in treating of facts as if they were context-free. But even factual observation sentences (e.g., 'the table is brown' uttered in reference to a brown table) presuppose the matrix of a language in which its words divide

²³ Alan R. White, *Truth*, (New York : Anchor Books, 1970), 80.

²⁴ Alan R. White, *Truth*, 83.

reality up in certain ways rather than in alternative ways. For present purposes three sorts of matrices may be distinguished: 1) language structures, 2) theoretical belief structures, and 3) experiential structures. Matrix-type 2) was noted by O'Neil in *Fact and Theory* when he writes: "Just as theories cannot afford to be completely a-factual so facts when significant are not a-theoretical."²⁵ Thus, one cannot provide "just the facts" without presupposing a theoretical framework in which the facts appear and make sense.

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²⁵ W.M. O'Neil, *Fact and Theory*, (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1969), 104.

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