

Davidson on The Great Fact

When does (6) ["The statement that p corresponds to the fact that p "] hold? Certainly when ' p and ' q ' are replaced by the same sentence; after that the difficulties set in. The statement that Naples is farther north than Red Bluff corresponds to the fact that Naples is farther north than Red Bluff, but also, it would seem, to the fact that Red Bluff is farther south than Naples (perhaps these are the same fact). Also to the fact that Red Bluff is farther south than the largest Italian city within thirty miles of Ischia. When we reflect that Naples is the city that satisfies the following description: it is the largest city within thirty miles of Ischia, and such that London is in England, then we begin to suspect that if a statement corresponds to one fact, it corresponds to all. ('Corresponds to the facts' may be right in the end). Indeed, employing principles implicit in our examples, it is easy to confirm the suspicion. The principles are these: if a statement corresponds to the fact described by an expression of the form 'the fact that p ', then it corresponds to the fact described by 'the fact that q ' provided either (1) the sentences that replace ' p ' and ' q ' are logically equivalent, or (2) ' p ' differs from ' q ' only in that a singular term has been replaced by a coextensive singular term. The confirming argument is this. Let ' s ' abbreviate some true sentence. Then surely the statement that s corresponds to the fact that s . But we may substitute for the second ' s ' the logically equivalent ('the x such that x is identical with Diogenes and s) is identical with (the x such that x is identical with Diogenes'). Applying the principle that we may substitute coextensive singular terms, we can substitute ' t ' for ' s ' in the last quoted sentence, provided ' t ' is true. Finally, reversing the first step we conclude that the statement that s corresponds to the fact that t , where ' s ' and ' t ' are any true sentences.

Since aside from matters of correspondence no way of distinguishing facts has been proposed, and this test fails to uncover a single difference, we may read the result of our argument as showing that there is exactly one fact. Descriptions like 'the fact that there are stupas in Nepal', if they describe at all, describe the same thing: The Great Fact. No point remains in distinguishing among various names of The Great Fact when written after 'corresponds to': we may as well settle for the single phrase 'corresponds to The Great Fact'. This unalterable predicate carries with it a redundant whiff on ontology, but beyond this there is apparently no telling it apart from 'is true'.

[from "True to the Facts," in *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 41-2.]