The Naming of Facts
Achille C. Varzi, Columbia University

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The Naming of Facts is a difficult matter,
It isn’t just one of your holiday games;
You may think at first I’m as mad as a hatter
When I tell you, a fact may have TWO DIFFERENT NAMES.

First of all, there’s the name that we tend to use daily,
Which is simply a ‘that’-clause, as in ‘that she kissed James’
Or ‘that Victor and Jonathan met with Bill Bailey’—
These are just normal sentences turned into names.

The fancier solutions, which are often applied,
Involve a gerundive, as in ‘her kissing James’,
Where the verb is alive (still) and kicking inside:?
These are not perfect nominals—yet perfect fact names.

Indeed, if you go for a name that’s less fake,
A name that will not like a sentence behave,
There’s a danger, I tell you, that you will mistake
The fact that she kissed for the kiss that she gave.3

Remember what J. (a philosopher) claims,
Viz. that facts are more copious than that which is done:

Her kissing James tenderly and her kissing James
Are two, while the kiss—which was tender—was one.4

But above and beyond there’s the practical matter
That the naming of facts can continue for aye;
For the name that you use can grow fatter and fatter
If you don’t pay attention in this delicate play.

When you fix on a fact in profound meditation,
The reason, believe me, is always the same
As your mind will engage in this rapt realization:
THAT the fact THAT the fact THAT each fact has a name
Has a name has a name
Has itself its own name—
Silly inscrutable singular Name.

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4 Namely, J. Bennett, Events and Their Names, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988, at pp. 78–79.