

## The Naming of Facts<sup>1</sup>

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:<sup>2</sup>  
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.<sup>3</sup>  
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.<sup>4</sup>  
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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<sup>1</sup> After T. S. Eliot, 'The Naming of Cats', in his *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats*, London: Faber and Faber, 1939.

<sup>2</sup> From Z. Vendler, 'Facts and Events', in his *Linguistics in Philosophy*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1967, p. 131.

<sup>3</sup> Cp. F. Ramsey, 'Facts and Propositions', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Suppl. Vol. 7 (1927), 153–170, at p. 156.

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