JOHN LOCKE AS SEMANTICIST

APPROVED:

[Signatures]

Major Professor
Lloyd Bibberg

Minor Professor
Floyd Stovall

Director of the Department of English

Dean of the Graduate School
JOHN LOCKE AS SEMANTICIST

THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council of the
North Texas State College in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

By

Gilbert Richard Fischer, B. A., Mus. B., Mus. M.

173360
St. Louis, Missouri

January, 1950
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I.</td>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II.</td>
<td>THE ESSAY CONCERNING HUMAN UNDERSTANDING</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III.</td>
<td>THE SIMPLE IDEAS AND THEIR MODES</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV.</td>
<td>THE COMPLEX IDEAS</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V.</td>
<td>ABSTRACTION</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI.</td>
<td>LOCKE'S THEORY OF DEFINITION</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII.</td>
<td>EVALUATION OF IDEAS</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII.</td>
<td>PARTICLES</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IX.</td>
<td>IMPERFECTIONS AND ABUSES OF LANGUAGE</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X.</td>
<td>CONCLUSION</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

There is no science so much under obligation to be clear in its meanings as that modern study of meaning called semantics. Yet, it is a thorny path which one must travel to possess the wisdom embraced by that term, or even to understand what has been said about that wisdom. It is not even an easy matter to tell what semantics is, for the scope of the subject varies considerably as considered by various writers. Although meanings may be conceived and transmitted in many ways, the most important tool used in communication must be admitted to be language, and the discussion of language remains the hard core of the matter of semantics.

Interest in language is by no means confined to modern times. The extreme range of the views which have been taken by philosophers and thinkers about language may be illustrated by the contrast between the doctrine of the logos of the fourth gospel in which "the Word was God," and the reflections of Falstaff on honor and his conclusion that honor is merely a word, merely air. Semantics, being an outgrowth of the scientific age, largely accepts the conclusion of Falstaff that words are merely air and not objects which give occult powers
to him who understands their lore. It concerns itself, therefore, with establishing a methodology for dealing with this formed air. By the very fact that it is a methodology it refuses consideration to any theories not conformable with that methodology. Thus, the Platonic, Neo-Platonic, Johannine, and Medieval Realist theories of words are dismissed contemptuously. The philosophers go unrecognized, and Aristotle in particular is made the butt of many attacks.

If one reads the average handbook on semantics, he will almost inevitably get an impression that intelligent thought about language is a contemporary contribution, that we are prevented from being humans by the Aristotelian forms of our language, and perhaps that all wars are simply the result of misuse of language. For the promises of the semanticists are often Utopian. Yet, oftentimes these writers can genuinely annoy the reader, whether through a seemingly unnecessary intricacy, as in The Meaning of Meaning,¹ or, more often, by a sort of modern advertising method such as that practiced by Vernon Lee.² It is offensive to us to be assured in diagrams, "Apples are used in the U. S. in the manufacture of pies, dumplings, cider, sauces, ETC."³ We do not disagree with Lee when he solemnly pronounces, "A map is not the

¹C. K. Ogden and I. A. Richards, The Meaning of Meaning.
²Vernon Lee, Language Habits in Human Affairs.
³Ibid., p. 65.
territory," or when he reminds us that "men can draw from the PAST, in and through the PRESENT, and make ready for the FUTURE," but we may well be reminded of tempests in teapots as we agree. Often, exhausted after finding our way through pages of such verbiage, we conclude that mountains have labored to bring forth a mouse.

Semantics must be protected from its friends, for semantic discipline is quite as important as its friends assure us—not, indeed, because it is a new wisdom as its friends seem ever to be assuring us, but because it is, indeed, an ancient and honorable development. The time is peculiarly ripe for the study of semantic systems of the past. Almost everything that is important in the modern science of semantics will be found to be explicitly stated by previous thinkers.

To illustrate this contention we shall examine the work of John Locke, whose interest in the problems of language makes his work among the most important milestones in semantic history. Whoever is familiar with the field of modern semantics will recognize immediately that the important ideas of the field are almost all included in his work. Almost all of our material will be taken from Locke's An Essay concerning Human Understanding, and in particular from the third book, which is a discussion of words. In the main this book has

4Ibid., p. 22. 5Ibid., p. 4.
remained proof against the centuries intervening between Locke's time and ours. The conclusions reached by Locke are as relevant in semantic matters now as they were then, and the treatment is fairly complete, with some exceptions that will be noted. It is probably true that the best introduction to semantic methods of thought is by way of certain chapters of Locke's third book, in spite of all of the sensationalism of so many modern writers.

Locke recognizes a three-fold division of the sciences into what he calls physica, practica, and semeiotike. Physica is "the knowledge of things, as they are in their own proper beings, their constitution, properties, and operations; whereby I mean not only matter and body, but spirits also which have their proper natures, constitutions, and operations, as well as bodies."6 This is the study of what we have since come to think of as "das Ding an sich." "The end of this," says Locke, "is bare speculative truth,"7 whether of God, angels, or bodies.

Practica is "the skill of right applying our own powers and actions for the attainment of things good and useful. The most considerable under this head is ethics, which is the seeking out those rules and measures of human actions

---

7 Ibid.
which lead to happiness, and the means to practise them. The end of this is not bare speculations, and the knowledge of truth; but right, and a conduct suitable to it.\textsuperscript{3}

There has been no lack of reflection on these two sciences throughout history. However, rarely has the third branch been elevated to the high position of equality with the other two. \textit{Semeiotike}, or the doctrine of signs, is the study mainly of words.

The consideration then of ideas and words, as the great instruments of knowledge, makes no despicable part of their contemplation who would take a view of human knowledge in the whole extent of it. And perhaps if it were distinctly weighed, and duly considered, they would afford us another sort of logic and critic than what we have been hitherto acquainted with. [Italics ours]\textsuperscript{9}

Such an emphasis on the study of words and other signs is implicit in any system of idealism. "For since," says Locke,

the things the mind contemplates are none of them, besides itself, present to the understanding, it is necessary that something else, as a sign or representation of the thing it considers, should be present to it; and these are ideas. And because the scene of ideas that makes one man's thoughts, cannot be laid open to the immediate view of another, nor laid up anywhere but in the memory, a no very sure repository; therefore to communicate our thoughts to one another, as well as record them for our own use, signs of our ideas are also necessary. Those which men have found most convenient, and therefore generally make use of, are articulate sounds.\textsuperscript{10}

\textsuperscript{8}\textit{Ibid.}, IV, xx1, 3, p. 608. \textsuperscript{9}\textit{Ibid.}, IV, xx1, 4, p. 608. \textsuperscript{10}\textit{Ibid.}
We cannot, that is, like the philosophers of Laputa, carry all the objects of interest for our conversation with us in a great bundle. But we can carry ideas of a great many objects on our shoulders. And instead of opening our pack of objects we can open our "word-hoard" to communicate about these objects. Yet, there is a tendency for us to forget that between the object as it is and the words we use about it, at least two, and often many steps are introduced. It is in these areas that most human mistakes are made. And, though he did not neglect other fields of interest (for his work in political philosophy, philosophy of religion, pure science, and religion was important), it was particularly in trying to weed out some of the mistakes from those areas that he made his contributions.

Brilliant followers he had, greater perhaps than he, but followers whose very brilliance made them more interested in reasoning than in observing widely. It is not to slander them to say that they were not men who had his desire to "take a view of human knowledge in the whole extent of it." Therefore, the broad view he had of life, of a deeply religious turn, degenerated after a while into the "logic-chopping" against which Carlyle vented his anger. This "logic-chopping" was associated in the minds of Emerson and Carlyle with Locke himself, and to this extent they were justified, that Locke had a middle-class disdain for poetry, intensified, no doubt, by his scientific
interests. However, Locke was not interested in "logic-chopping," as for instance, Hume was, who would follow logic to results that he himself had to admit were quite out of line with his experience. On the contrary, Locke gives observation and reflection an equal place.

The thing of interest to Locke was the survey of all of experience, which gives perspective and, above all, tolerance. The survey, however, disclosed paradoxes. Locke was not unaware of them, but he had no reason to emphasize them. His followers seized on various facets of his thought, generally emphasizing the paradoxes, and in the course of a hundred years much of his thought became neglected. Thus semantics which rose to a high state of development in Locke, though occasionally revived since Locke, did not, in the main, suit the temper of the times, and it lay fallow for most of two hundred years. Yet it survived in the men of letters of the Eighteenth Century, as Kenneth Maclean has pointed out, and in the thinking of at least some of the philosophers, such as Berkeley, Bentham, and Dugald Stewart. Thus, among the examples of the influence of Locke's semantic thought noted by Maclean we may observe at least two instances. For the semanticist's point of view flourishes in the following remark of Tom Paine:

11 See Kenneth Maclean, John Locke and English Literature of the Eighteenth Century.
Mr. Burke has two or three times, in his parliamentary speeches, and in his publications, made use of a jingle of words that convey no ideas. Speaking of government, he says, "It is better to have monarchy for its basis, and republicanism for its corrective, than republicanism for its basis, and monarchy for its corrective." 12

Although one may hesitate to accept Paine's opinion at full value, for often words which transmit ideas to others are a "mere jingle" to the semanticist; yet this phrase certainly reflects the semantic point of view. Few readers of Stuart Chase's *Tyranny of Words* would recognize it as an alien phrase, were it inserted into that book.

Apparently, Locke's theory of definition left its traces in Johnson's *Dictionary*, according to Maclean:

> Names for immaterial complex ideas, especially moral ideas, may be defined by listing the simple ideas they include, which Johnson did in his *Dictionary* with an acuteness of intellect and a precision of language which were sufficient in themselves to convince Boswell of his genius. 13

Yet, other aspects of Locke's philosophy certainly pushed his semantics into the background. Modern semantics has sprung largely from the work of the psychologists, themselves distantly following the pointing of Locke's finger, from the *Significs* of Lady Welby, and from philological studies such as those of Bréal in his *Semantics*. However, according to Ogden and Richards,


13 Maclean, op. cit., p. 116.
... although M. Breal's researches drew attention to a number of fascinating phenomena in the history of language, and awakened a fresh interest in the educational possibilities of etymology, the net result was disappointing.14

So might the field have remained neglected for many more years had not a series of unexpected events shaken the hold of the "crass" materialism of the late Nineteenth Century. Among these were the discovery of radio-activity, the formulation of the theory of relativity, and the quantum theory. The methodology of the schools of psychology which had most pride and confidence in their scientific procedure was violently attacked by the Gestaltists and the Freidians. The theory of evolution, although becoming ever more firmly entrenched, was failing to provide a satisfactory account of the mechanism of evolution. The first World War made a naive theory of progress difficult to maintain and the events of subsequent decades have not been reassuring.

Such events as these have brought under challenge much of Nineteenth Century scientific philosophy and a corresponding increase of interest in the role of symbolism in science and language. The growth of this interest is clearly reflected in the number of entries under the heading Semantics in the International Guide to Periodicals in recent years as illustrated in the following table:

14 Ogden and Richards, op. cit., p. 2.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Number of Entries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1920-1923</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931-1937</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937-1940</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940-1943</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1943-1946</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The number of articles listed under the names of related subjects, and the number of cross references have shown a corresponding multiplication, indicating not only the greater quantity of writing on the subject, but also the greater area of knowledge affected by it. Pointing out the large number of books published recently in this area of thought, Susanne Langer, in the excellent first chapter of *Philosophy in a New Key*, heralds the birth of a new philosophical epoch. "In all quietness," she says,

> along purely rational lines, mathematics has developed just as brilliantly and vitally as any experimental technique, step by step, has kept abreast of discovery and observation; and all at once, the edifice of human knowledge stands before us, not as a vast collection of sense reports, but as a structure of facts that are symbols and laws that are their meanings. A new philosophical theme has been set forth to a coming age: an epistemological theme, the comprehension of science. The power of symbolism is its cue, as the finality of sense data was the cue of a former epoch.\(^{15}\)

From this brief excerpt Susanne Langer might be supposed to be interested in the symbolism primarily of mathematics. This, however, is not the case.

A word that everyone snaps up, or a question that has everybody excited, probably carries a generative

---

\(^{15}\) Susanne Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key*, p. 16.
idea—the germ of a complete reorientation in metaphysics, or at least the "Open Sesame" of some new positive science. The sudden vogue of such a key-idea is due to the fact that all sensitive and active minds turn at once to exploiting it; we try it in every possible connection, for every purpose, experiment with possible stretches of its strict meaning, with generalizations and derivatives. When we become familiar with the new idea our expectations do not outrun its actual uses quite so far, and then its unbalanced popularity is over. We settle down to the problems that it has really generated, and these become the characteristic issues of our time.  

Is not the implication of these words that the thinkers of many fields have suddenly become aware of that third science which Locke was pointing out, semeiotike, of which he speculated that perhaps it "would afford us another sort of logic and critic than what we have been hitherto acquainted with"?

Of the "power of symbolism" there are many examples, and the laws of the various types are not identical. Nevertheless, no type of symbolism is as important to us as is language; and semantics, therefore, which is the study of symbolism primarily in its linguistic manifestations, is a subject of particular concern to us. How modern are the following words of Dugald Stewart, one of the most language-minded of philosophers:

Whatever tends to diminish the ambiguities of speech, or to fix, with more logical precision, the import of general terms;—above all, whatever tends to embody, in popular forms of expression, the ideas and feelings of the wise and good, augments the natural powers of the human understanding, and enables the succeeding race to start from a higher ground than was occupied by their fathers. The remark applies with peculiar force to the study of the Mind itself; a study, where the chief source of

16 Ibid., p. 18.
error is the imperfection of words; and where every improvement on this great instrument of thought may be justly regarded in the light of a discovery.17

"Diminishing the ambiguities of speech" is, as Stewart suggests, only one of the functions of semantics. Its chief raison d'être must be to expand the possibilities of symbolic use of language, just as the improvement in symbolism of the Arabic over the Roman system of numerals has made it possible for the mind to encompass vastly more facts with considerably less effort. For is not much of the confusion of modern thought traceable to the fact that knowledge has vastly outstripped our means of symbolizing it, so that the mind reels under its burden of varied data, powerless either to grasp enough new facts or to unify what it already has?

A keen realization of this fact is shown in the preface of The Meaning of Meaning.

The view that language works well enough as it is, can only be held by those who use it merely in such affairs as could be conducted without it—the business of the paper-boy or the butcher, for instance, where all that needs to be referred to can equally well be pointed at. None but those who shut their eyes to the hasty re-adaptation to totally new circumstances which the human race has during the last century been blindly endeavoring to achieve, can pretend that there is no need to examine critically the most important of all the instruments of civilization. New millions of participants in the control of general affairs must now attempt to form personal opinions upon matters which were once left to a few. At the same time the complexity of these matters has immensely increased. The old view that the only access to a subject is through prolonged study of

it, has, if it be true, consequences for the immediate future which have not yet been faced. The alternative is to raise the level of communication through a direct study of its conditions, its dangers and its difficulties.\textsuperscript{18}

The modern history of semantics may well be considered to begin with the third book of John Locke's \textit{Essay concerning Human Understanding}, written largely during the period of Locke's exile in Holland and published in 1690, the year after his triumphant return to England on the queen's ship.

Yet, Locke receives little mention in \textit{The Meaning of Meaning}, and but one, and that derogatory, in \textit{Science and Sanity}: "It is little known and seldom taken into consideration that long ago Locke was quite clear on the point that the misuse of language has often been taken for deep mysteries of science; but Locke, unfortunately, did not take into consideration structure and semantic reaction; so his arguments were, in general, non-operative."\textsuperscript{19} Now this, like so many other dogmatic statements in that amazing book, is simply nonsense.

The popular works on semantics, such as Stuart Chase's \textit{Tyranny of Words}, are full of jibes at the "philosophers," at Plato, Kant, or Aristotle, but there is no evidence of a realization of the work of Locke or of any other philosopher.

\textsuperscript{18}Ogden and Richards, \textit{op. cit.}, p. ix.

\textsuperscript{19}Alfred Korzybski, \textit{Science and Sanity}, p. 328.
in the field. These works make a scape-goat of Kant and an idol of cant. The writers are as thoroughly bigoted and prejudiced as any of the priests at whom they sneer. The time is ripe for a rediscovery of Locke.

Perhaps his forgotten third book of the Essay is the last contribution Locke may make to the modern mind. For Locke's treatment of the subject has the grace of modesty lacking in the modern writers. He does not, as Korzybski, spend eight pages of elementary discussion of colloidal behavior and then naively and confidently inform us, "After this brief account of the structural peculiarities of the domain in which life is found, we can understand the baffling 'body-mind' problem,"20 which is as un-semantic a piece of writing as any Fourth of July orator has ever been accused of.

---

20Ibid., p. 119.
CHAPTER II

THE ESSAY CONCERNING HUMAN UNDERSTANDING

In the year 1670, Locke tells us, occurred a conversation in his room between five or six of his friends. We do not know what the subject was, except that we are told it was not the subject of the Essay. As so often happens, the discussion reached an impasse.

After we had a while puzzled ourselves, without coming any nearer a resolution of those doubts which perplexed us, it came into my thoughts, that we took a wrong course; and that before we set ourselves upon inquiries of that nature, it was necessary to examine our own abilities, and see what objects our understandings were, or were not, fitted to deal with.¹

Till that was done, I suspected that we began at the wrong end, and in vain sought for satisfaction in a quiet and sure possession of truths that most concerned us, whilst we let loose our thoughts into the vast ocean of being . . . . Thus men, extending their inquiries beyond their capacities, and letting their thoughts wander into those depths where they can find no sure footing, it is no wonder that they raise questions and multiply disputes, which never coming to any clear resolution, are proper only to continue and increase their doubts, and to confirm them at last in perfect scepticism.²

Accordingly, he offered to draw up a page of principles for such discussions "to see what objects our understandings

¹John Locke, An Essay concerning Human Understanding, p. x.
²Ibid., I, 1, 7, p. 4.
were, or were not, fitted to deal with." The work, "having been thus begun by chance, was continued by entreaty; written by incoherent parcels; and, after long intervals of neglect, resumed again, as my humour or occasions permitted"; finally, in 1690 the results were published as the Essay concerning Human Understanding. As Locke realized, the work is anything but well organized. It is over-long, wordy, repetitious.

"But, to confess the truth," says Locke, "I am now too lazy or too busy to make it shorter." Yet, ill-written as it is, it is unquestionably Locke's masterpiece. For he has made men aware that some things simply cannot be talked about intelligently. A close similarity may be noted between Locke's purpose in writing the Essay and the following statement in the preface of The Meaning of Meaning.

Of their own contributions towards the foundations of a science of Symbolism the following seem to them to have most value:

(1) An account of interpretation in causal terms by which the treatment of language as a system of signs becomes capable of results, among which may be noticed the beginning of a division between what cannot be intelligibly talked of and what can . . .

Locke's bulky work is composed of four books. In the first he attacks the doctrine of innate ideas; in the second, ideas are classified and the various types evaluated; the third book treats of words from a semantic standpoint; the fourth discusses the degrees and extent of our knowledge, judgment,

---

3Ibid., p. x.  
4Ibid.  
probability, truth and error, faith and reason, and various other of the conclusions inherent in the theories expounded in the first three books. It is primarily with the second and third books that we must deal.

Basic to Locke's Essay is his definition of the "objects of our understanding," which he calls ideas, as "whatever is meant by phantasm, notion, species, or whatever it is which the mind can be employed about in thinking." These, he thinks men will agree, exist in men's minds. "Every one is conscious of them in himself; and men's words and actions will satisfy him that they are in others."  

Man finds, however, that for two reasons it is necessary for him to have signs (a better term would be symbols) to represent his ideas. In the first place, such signs help him to classify and remember his ideas. In the second place, man, being a social animal, needs a means of communication of his ideas. Having, therefore, a ready capacity for making a variety of sounds, man forms these sounds into words to signify his ideas. From this we may see how inseparable are ideas and words in Locke's system.

There are three sources of our ideas: sensation, reflection, and inspiration. This concept was a startling one to the men of Locke's day, for it was generally agreed that men were born with innate ideas, an idea of God, for example.

6 Locke, op. cit., I, 1, 8, p. 4. 7 Ibid., p. 5.
Observing that

... it is an established opinion among some men, that there are in the understanding certain innate principles; some primary notions, characters, as it were, stamped upon the mind of man, which the soul receives in its very first being, and brings into the world with it.\(^3\)

Locke devotes a considerable space to the refutation of this view. His arguments need not detain us, except to note that his arguments are empirical, rather than rational. If men had innate ideas they would be universally observed, especially among children. Since the ideas which are thought to be innate are not thus found universally, we may conclude that there are none such. Besides, it is possible to explain the occurrence of all types of ideas in a simple, satisfying manner without recourse to the doctrine of innate ideas.

But Locke takes a step further. He casts a considerable doubt upon the frequency of revelation as a source of ideas. It is interesting to note the parallel between his thinking and that of his friend Newton, and one is tempted to speculate whether in the fifteen-odd years of their acquaintance before the publication of Newton's *Principia* (1687) and Locke's *Essay* they might not have reached their similar viewpoints through an exchange of ideas. For Newton introduced the idea of the world as a machine, which, however, was not so perfectly adjusted that an occasional intervention by God

\(^3\)Ibid., I, ii, 1, p. 12.
was not needed to set the universe right again. And Locke's system all but dispensed with the need for a God in forming our knowledge, yet held the door open for such revelations as God wanted to make to mankind—God was, however, under the necessity of proving that the revelation was actually such. (Locke's faith in Christianity was, however, remarkably steadfast, considering the movement toward skepticism which sprang from his theories.) Locke was particularly interested in warning against what he called "enthusiasm," that is, the tendency for each small group of individuals to delude itself into believing that it had a special inspiration from God. The religious controversies and wars of the previous century and a half were much in the mind of such Restoration writers as Locke and Dryden.

He therefore that will not give himself up to all the extravagancies of delusion and error, must bring this guide of his light within to the trial. God, when he makes the prophet, does not unmake the man; he leaves all his faculties in their natural state, to enable him to judge of his inspirations, whether they be of divine original or no. When he illuminates the mind with supernatural light, he does not extinguish what is natural. If he would have us assent to the truth of any proposition, he either evidences that truth by the usual methods of natural reason, or else makes it known to be a truth which he would have us assent to by his authority, and convinces us that it is from him by some marks which reason cannot be mistaken in. Reason must be our last judge and guide in every thing. [Italics ours]"

Practically, then, Locke believes that all of our knowledge is derived from the two sources of sensation and reflection.

9Ibid., IV, xix, 14, p. 595.
Let us . . . suppose the mind to be . . . white paper, void of all characters, without any ideas; how comes it to be furnished? Whence comes it by that vast store, which the busy and boundless fancy of man has painted on it with an almost endless variety? Whence has it all the materials of reason and knowledge? To this I answer, in one word, From experience; in that all our knowledge is founded, and from that it ultimately derives itself. Our observation, employed either about external sensible objects, or about the internal operations of our minds, perceived and reflected on by ourselves, is that which supplies our understandings with all the materials of thinking. These two are the fountains of knowledge, from whence all the ideas we have, or can naturally have, do spring. [Italics ours]¹⁰

The various types of ideas and the varying degrees of validity ascribed to them by Locke must receive discussion in several later chapters. It may, perhaps, be more profitable, however, to take a general view of the relationship between words, ideas, and things as discussed by Locke and other semanticists. One of the most convenient of devices for illustrating such a discussion is the triangle of reference of Ogden and Richards reproduced on the following page.¹¹

By means of this device not only their system, but also any of the historical systems may be conveniently outlined and compared, depending upon which of the lines we draw heavy and which we dot, or by such other modifications as may be applicable to individual systems. Indeed, a thorough understanding of the relationships possible in such a system of reference would make one a semanticist.

¹⁰Ibid., II, 1, 2, p. 59.
¹¹Ogden and Richards, op. cit., p. 11.
As Ogden and Richards see it, the most important thing to observe about this triangle is that although there is a direct relationship between the thought and the referent, and between the thought and the symbol, the symbol and referent are connected only indirectly through the thought.

Between the symbol and the referent there is no relevant relation other than the indirect one, which consists in its being used by someone to stand for a referent. Symbol and Referent, that is to say, are not connected directly (and when, for grammatical reasons, we imply such a relation, it will merely be an imputed, as opposed to a real relation) but only indirectly round the two sides of the triangle.12

Semanticists of the Korzybski school express this truth by the phrase "the word is not the thing." However, once started on this track, it is equally important to remember that the word is not the thought and that the thought is not the thing.

12

Ibid.
Thus we have two types of relationship which must not be confused. As expressed by Ogden and Richards, the important thing to remember is that fairly direct relationships exist along two sides of the triangle, but not along the third. But considered from the standpoint of adequacy, truth, or correctness of the relationships (marked with an asterisk in the diagram), the thought can rarely be adequate to the referent (Berkeley would dispute this by saying that the thought is the referent and that the idea of a triangular relationship is pure fantasy), nor the symbol entirely correct for the thought, nor the symbol true to the referent. On both of these types of relationship Locke's thought will be found quite clear.

As we have seen, according to Locke words signify the ideas which we have in our minds. He strenuously denies that words signify things.

That, then, which words are the marks of are the ideas of the speaker; nor can any one apply them, as marks, immediately to any thing else but the ideas that he himself hath. For, this would be to make them signs of his own conceptions, and yet apply them to other ideas; which would be to make them signs and not signs of his ideas at the same time; and so, in effect to have no signification at all.13

A man may apply words to his ideas for either of two reasons, according to Locke, to aid his thinking, or to transmit his ideas to others.

The use men have of these marks being either to record their own thoughts for the assistance of their own memory, or, as it were, to bring out their ideas, and lay them before the view of others: words in their primary or immediate signification stand for nothing but the ideas in the mind of him that uses them, how imperfectly soever or carelessly those ideas are collected from the things which they are supposed to represent. [Italics ours][14]

Yet, words are often referred, in practice, to other things than to the ideas of the speaker. Such a reference is made for convenience—it is a shortcut, whatever other referent is used, and from such a shortcut spring many of the faulty uses of language that make semantic discipline necessary. The two false references thus made are (1) the reference of words to the ideas of someone other than the speaker and (2) their reference to things. Ogden and Richards are not quite so clear on these points as Locke is. The most common cause of our referring words to the ideas of someone else is the supposition that there is a commonly accepted meaning for each word which is shared by everyone who uses the language. Within limits this is, of course, true, but the limits are dangerously flexible. As Locke says,

They suppose their words to be marks of the ideas in the minds also of other men, with whom they communicate; for else they should talk in vain, and could not be understood, if the sounds they applied to one idea were such as by the same hearer were applied to another, which is to speak two languages. But in this men stand not usually to examine whether the idea they and those they discourse with have in their minds be the same; but think it enough that they use the word, as they

[14] Ibid.
imagine, in the common acceptation of that language; in which they suppose, that the men of that country apply that name.

Secondly, Because men would not be thought to talk barely of their own imaginations, but of things as really they are; therefore they often suppose, their words to stand also for the reality of things.15

But, in addition to these shortcuts and their underlying assumptions, another and stranger thing takes place:

There comes, by constant use, to be such a connexion between certain sounds and the ideas they stand for, that the names heard almost as readily excite certain ideas, as if the objects themselves which are apt to produce them did actually affect the senses.16

This quotation is the cue for the entrance of Pavlov's dogs. For Pavlov's experiments are the classical illustration of the very point Locke is making, that the sign of an object tends to produce through association the result which rightly is caused only by the object.

We may compare Locke's point of view in these statements with the following words of Ogden and Richards:

Language if it is to be used must be a ready instrument. The hardness and ease of a phrase is always more important in deciding whether it will be extensively used than its accuracy. Thus such shorthand as the word 'means' is constantly used so as to imply a direct relation between words and things, phrases and situations.17

It must be noted, for it is basic to Locke's philosophy of language, that the imposition of a meaning on any word is

15Ibid., III, 11, 4 and 5, pp. 324 f.
16Ibid., III, 11, 6, p. 325.
17Ogden and Richards, op. cit., p. 12.
a perfectly arbitrary process, as indeed it must be if Locke’s ideas are to be consistent. For if there are no innate ideas there can hardly be innate meanings for words. But if the meanings are arbitrarily imposed on words, then there must be variances of meaning in a word as used by different individuals. The voluntary imposition of meaning

is so necessary in the use of language, that in this respect, the knowing and the ignorant, the learned and unlearned, use the words they speak (with any meaning) all alike. They, in everyman’s mouth, stand for the ideas he has, and which he would express by them. A child having taken notice of nothing in the metal he hears called "gold," but the bright shining yellow colour, he applies the word "gold" only to his own idea of that colour, and nothing else; and therefore calls the same colour in a peacock’s tail, "gold." Another, that hath better observed, adds to shining yellow great weight; and then the sound "gold," when he uses it, stands for a complex idea of a shining yellow and very weighty substance. Another adds to those qualities fusibility; and then the word "gold" to him signifies a body, bright, yellow, fusible, and very heavy. Another adds malleability. Each of these uses equally the word "gold," when they have occasion to express the idea which they have applied it to; but it is evident that each can apply it only to his own idea; nor can he make it stand as a sign of such a complex idea as he has not.

From his simple premises Locke derives several interesting theories concerning the nature and early stages of language. In the first place, man is presented as a coiner of words which represent his own ideas. We may infer that their primary use is to aid thinking, rather than communication—to identify ideas rather than to transmit them—for only after an idea is given a name in a single person’s

---

mind can that name be given to a similar idea in the minds of others. "Every man has . . . inviolable . . . liberty to make words stand for what ideas he pleases." 19

Secondly, it is unlikely that a word will stand for exactly the same idea in the minds of any two persons.

Thirdly, although the signification of any word will probably differ slightly in any two minds, yet

common use, by a tacit consent, appropriates certain sounds to certain ideas in all languages, which so far limits the signification of that sound, that unless a man applies it to the same idea, he does not speak properly; and let me add, that unless a man's words excite the same ideas in the hearer, which he makes them stand for in speaking, he does not speak intelligibly. 20

Fourthly, the arbitrary imposition of words as signifiers of ideas causes different languages, and the differences of languages are a proof of the arbitrariness of words.

... words ... come to be made use of by men as the signs for their ideas; not by any natural connexion that there is between particular articulate sounds and certain ideas, for then there would be but one language amongst all men; but by a voluntary imposition . . . 21

Fifthly,

I doubt not but, if we could trace them to their sources, we should find, in all languages, the names which stand for things that fall not under our senses to have had their first rise from sensible ideas. 22

Sixthly, metaphor is one of the most important methods of language formation.

\[19\text{ibid., III, ii, 8, p. 326.} \quad 20\text{ibid.}\]
\[21\text{ibid., III, ii, 1, p. 323.}\]
\[22\text{ibid., III, i, 5, p. 322.}\]
... we remark how great a dependence our words have on common sensible ideas; and how those which are made use of to stand for actions and notions quite removed from sense, have their rise from thence, and from obvious sensible ideas are transferred to more abstruse significations, and made to stand for ideas that come not under the cognizance of our senses: e.g., to "imagine, apprehend, comprehend, adhere, conceive, instil, disgust, disturbance, tranquillity," etc., are all words taken from the operations of sensible things, and applied to certain modes of thinking. Spirit, in its primary signification, is "breath"; angel, a "messenger": ...  

Seventhly, we are thus given an insight into the mind of primitive man.

By which we may give some kind of guess what kind of notions they were and whence derived, which filled their minds who were the first beginners of languages.  

Finally, misunderstanding of the simple premises leads to abuse of language, as will be noted later.

---

23 Ibid.  
24 Ibid.
CHAPTER III

THE SIMPLE IDEAS AND THEIR MODES

Locke classifies all of our ideas under the two headings, simple and complex. Since the complex ideas are combinations of simple ideas, it follows that the material of all of our knowledge is simple ideas. These are of two kinds, those of sensation and reflection. Locke believes that our minds, although free of innate ideas, have an innate capacity to receive the impressions made upon them by the senses. In this operation they are merely passive and have no power to resist the impressions. There are some ideas impressed upon the mind through a single sense. Such are sensations of color, heat, and sound.

Other ideas enter the mind through more than one sense, such as our ideas of space or extension, figure, rest, and motion, which may be received by the mind either through the sight or feeling. Still other ideas, such as perception and willing, are created by the mind itself and are ideas of reflection. The fourth type enter the mind through both sensory channels and reflection. Examples of these are pleasure and pain, existence and unity, power and succession.
All of our knowledge whether real or fictitious is, according to Locke, based upon these simple materials. From this premise follows the conclusion that we may not know "things as they are." For Locke understands that God might in the creation of man have "made a creature with other organs, and more ways to convey into the understanding the notice of corporeal things than those five as they are usually counted, which he has given to man."\(^1\) That is, and science is frequently confirming Locke's supposition, "things as they are" have many characteristics which are hidden to the senses. "Yet," he continues,

I think it is not possible for anyone to imagine any other qualities in bodies, howsoever constituted whereby they can be taken notice of, besides sounds, tastes, smells, visible and tangible qualities. And had mankind been made with but four senses, the qualities then which are the objects of the fifth sense, had been as far from our notice, imagination, and conception, as now any belonging to a sixth, seventh, or eighth sense, can possibly be; which whether yet some other creatures, in some other parts of this vast and stupendous universe, may not have, will be a great presumption to deny. He that will not set himself proudly at the top of all things, but will consider the immensity of this fabric, and the great variety that is to be found in this little and inconsiderable part of it which he has to do with, may be apt to think, that in other mansions of it there may be other and different intelligible beings, of whose faculties he has as little knowledge or apprehension, as a worm shut up in one drawer of a cabinet hath of the senses or understanding of a man; such variety and excellency being suitable to the wisdom and power of the Maker. I have here followed the common opinion of man's having but

---

five senses, though perhaps there may be justly counted more; but either supposition serves equally to my present purpose.²

Locke supposes that bodies have two types of qualities, primary and secondary. The primary qualities are the structure of bodies as they really are, their solidity, extension, figure, or mobility, for example. Locke's particular ideas of the ultimate structure of matter probably do not have the validity that they long seemed to have. He himself would not have been surprised, for as we remember, scientific knowledge was to him "bare speculative knowledge." Nevertheless, in Locke's view matter must have some ultimately real structure which is largely hidden from us, but of which we may see some evidences. This structure constitutes the primary qualities of matter, some of which are detectable by the senses, as, for example, extension.

The secondary qualities, on the other hand, may not be detected by the senses. The peculiar structure of a substance will make it reflect light with a particular color. Thus blood appears red. But redness is not part of the structure of blood, which "by a good microscope, wherein its lesser parts appear, shows only some few globules of red, swimming in a pellucid liquor; and how these red globules would appear, if glasses could be found that yet could magnify them . . . is uncertain."³ Locke argues that if the

²Ibid. ³Ibid., II, xxiii, 11, p. 213.
redness were in the object such a change could not occur. Therefore, such qualities as color must be dependent upon the sensory apparatus through which the mind perceives the object.

Thus we must be careful to distinguish between the qualities of bodies as they really are and our perceptions of the bodies. We must not think that our ideas are exactly the images and resemblances of something inherent in the subject; most of those of sensation being in the mind no more the likeness of something existing without us than the names that stand for them are the likeness of our ideas, which yet upon hearing they are apt to excite in us.\(^4\)

Meaning is thus, as Susanne Langer pointed out, reduced to symbolisms.\(^5\) The name is a sign for the idea, but the idea, also, is but a sign of reality. Later skepticism went further than Locke's, until even that validity which Locke granted to our ideas of objects is questioned.

Locke is not the least bit skeptical, however, about our simple ideas of reflection. They are just as we perceive them. Examples of them are perception, contemplation, memory, attention, repetition, discerning, comparing, compounding, naming and abstracting.

It is only through these simple ideas that we receive our knowledge:

\(^4\)Ibid., II, viii, 7, p. 85.

For methinks the understanding is not much unlike a closet wholly shut from light, with only some little opening left to let in external visible resemblances or ideas of things without; would the pictures coming into such a dark room but stay there, and lie so orderly as to be found upon occasion, it would very much resemble the understanding of a man in reference to all objects of sight, and the ideas of them.⁶

In addition to the simple ideas described above there is a type of complex idea closely related to them, being in fact composed of modifications of the simple ideas. These are called the simple modes. Such a modification may take place in the simple idea of space, for each different distance is a different modification of space; and each idea of any different distance, or space is a simple mode of this idea . . . . When any . . . stated lengths or measures of space are made familiar to men's thoughts, they can in their minds repeat them as often as they will without mixing or joining to them the idea of body, or any thing else; and frame to themselves the ideas of long, square, or cubic, feet, yards, or fathoms, here amongst the bodies of the universe, or else beyond the utmost bounds of all bodies; and by adding these still one to another, enlarge their ideas of space as much as they please. The power of repeating, or doubling any idea we have of any distance, and adding it to the former as often as we will, without being ever able to come to any stop or stint, let us enlarge it as much as we will, is that which gives us the idea of immensity.⁷

Similarly, the simple idea of duration has its modes or modifications, and the simple idea of unity, or one, has its modes of number, "two being as distinct from one as three hundred."⁸

⁷Ibid., II, xiii, 4, p. 111.
⁸Ibid., II, xiii, 1, p. 110.
Just as Locke derives the idea of immensity from a modification of space, so he derives the idea of infinity from the idea of number.

Finite then, and infinite, being by the mind looked on as modifications of expansion and duration, the next thing to be considered, is, how the mind comes by them. As for the idea of finite, there is no great difficulty. The obvious portions of extension that affect our senses, carry with them into the mind the idea of finite; and the ordinary periods of succession, whereby we measure time and duration, as hours, days, and years, are bounded lengths. The difficulty is, how we come by these boundless ideas of eternity and immensity, since the objects we converse with, come so much short of any approach or proportion to that largeness.

Every one that has any idea of any stated lengths of space, as a foot, finds that he can repeat that idea; and, joining it to the former, make the idea of two feet; and by the addition of a third, three feet; and so on, without ever coming to an end of his addition, whether of the same idea of a foot, or if he pleases of doubling it, or any other idea he has of any length, as a mile, or diameter of the earth, or of the orbis magnus; for whichever of these he takes, and how often soever he doubles, or any otherwise multiplies it, he finds that after he has continued his doubling in his thoughts, and enlarged his idea as much as he pleases, he has no more reason to stop, nor is one jot nearer the end of such addition, than he was at first setting out. The power of enlarging his idea of space by farther additions remaining still the same, he hence takes the idea of infinite space.9

"This," Locke says, "i think, is the way whereby the mind gets the idea of infinite space."10 So immensity and infinity and such ideas are mental. Does that mean that such a boundless space actually exists outside the mind?

It is a quite different consideration, to examine whether the mind has the idea of such a boundless space

9Ibid., II, xvi, 2 and 3, p. 145.
10Ibid., II, xvi, 4, p. 146.
actually existing, since our ideas are not always proofs of the existence of thing.\footnote{11}

Yet from the purely mental standpoint, Locke believes, "it is impossible the mind should be ever able to find or suppose any end of it, or be stopped any where in its progress in this space, how far soever it extends its thoughts."\footnote{12}

This paradox, that the mind cannot perceive things outside of space, nor can it conceive an ultimate limitation of space, joined with the realization of the problems involved in such infinity of space, or of time or number, carries Locke far toward Kant's classification of space and time as categories of perception. It is also a far step in the direction of Berkeley's pure idealism, for if only a sort of wishful thinking grants validity to our ideas of space and time, why may we not extend our area of skepticism?

Our immediate concern, however, is not with the ideas derived by Locke's followers from his epistemological speculations, but with the fact that such ideas as immensity and infinity have undergone considerable attack in the semantic age. Thus Korzybski is careful to append a footnote to his use of the word "infinity": "I use the term infinite . . . in the sense of Cantor as a variable finite."\footnote{13}

\footnote{11}{Ibid., II, xvii, 4, p. 146.} \footnote{12}{Ibid.} \footnote{13}{Alfred Korzybski, Science and Sanity, p. 93, note.}
place he says, "The term 'infinite' is used here as an adjective describing the characteristics of a process, but should never be used as a noun, as this leads to self-contradictions. The term 'infinity,' as a noun, is used here only as an abbreviation for the phrase 'infinite process of generating numbers.'" Still again he says, "It is the old primitive semantic reaction to suppose that man is the only measure of things."  

Actually, Korzybski is probably right that the word infinity is an example of taking man as the measure of things. As to the propriety of using the word as a noun (or for that matter as an adjective, adverb, interjection, or pacifier) Locke's presumed argument makes sense: Does the idea, he would ask, exist in the mind of the speaker? There is nothing gained by dishonesty or moralizing. Even the illegitimate children of our mind must receive some sort of a name, and perhaps must upon occasion be spoken of. Meanwhile, we may ponder Korzybski's suggestion that we differentiate between infinity as a semantic process of generating numbers and the finite numbers that are generated.  

Thinking also, according to Locke, has its simple modes or modifications, such as sensation, remembrance, recollection, contemplation, reverie, and attention. Dreaming is included

---

\[1^4\text{Ibid.}, p. 205.\]  
\[15\text{Ibid.}, p. 212.\]  
\[16\text{Ibid.}, see Chapter XIV.\]
among the modes of thinking. Locke's interpretation of dreaming is a peculiarly weak aspect of his psychology. It is related and gives support to his opinion that "thinking is the action and not the essence of the soul."\textsuperscript{17}

Another type of simple ideas subject to modification is that including the modes of pleasure and pain. These modes include delight, love and hate (when applied to inanimate insensible beings), desire, joy, sorrow, hope, fear, despair, anger, envy, and others. This grouping of the emotions as mental phenomena does violence to our textbook psychology. The reason for the difference is that Locke's treatment of these and other perceptions is frankly subjective. Our textbook psychology makes a heroic attempt to be objective. Locke says "Let any man look into his mind and observe these things." Objective psychology says, "There is no objective proof of the existence of mind." Perhaps the best argument in defense of Locke's method is that of Langer:

The physical sciences found their stride without hesitation; psychology and sociology tried hard and seriously to "catch the tune and keep the step," but with mathematical laws they were never really handy. Psychologists have probably spent almost as much time and type avowing their empiricism, their factual premises, their experimental techniques, as recording experiments and making general inductions. They still tell us that their lack of laws and calculable results is due to the fact that psychology is but young. When physics was as old as psychology is now, it was a definite, systematic body of highly general facts, and the possibilities of its future expansion were clearly

\textsuperscript{17}Locke, \textit{op. cit.}, II, xix, 4, p. 160.
visible in every line of its natural progress. It could say of itself, like Topsy, "I wasn't made, I growed."
But our scientific psychology is made in the laboratory, and especially in the methodological forum. A good deal has, indeed, been made; but the synthetic organism still does not grow like a wild plant; its technical triumphs are apt to be discoveries in physiology or chemistry instead of psychological "facts."

But above and beyond this suspicion is Locke's own argument, which we shall observe in discussing his theory of definition, that the cause of a sensation and our perception of it must not be confused.

Locke concludes his discussion of the simple ideas with a treatment of the idea of power. He recognizes two kinds of power. Active power is the power to make a change, and passive power is the power to receive a change. Locke admits having been in error in his discussion of power in the first edition, and of having had a suspicion of his error but not having been able to find it (an evidence of his unwillingness simply to be logical).

I was put upon a stricter review of this chapter; wherein lighting upon a very easy and scarce observable slip I had made in putting one seemingly indifferent word for another, that discovery opened to me this present view, which here, in this second edition, I submit to the learned world, and which, in short, is this: Liberty is a power to act or not to act, according as the mind directs. A power to direct the operative faculties to motion or rest in particular instances, is that which we call the "will."

The chapter on power must be of very great interest to anyone studying Utilitarianism, or the "hedonistic calculus,"

18 Langer, op. cit., p. 12.
19 Locke, op. cit., II, xxi, 71, p. 199.
for it must sometimes seem that the fancy of the whole century was bred in the mind of Locke. We have, however, only two reasons to note the chapter, the first being the fact that even Locke's great caution in his analysis of semantic problems apparently did not spare his making a significant mistake because of an apparently insignificant misuse of words. But, as we shall see, it is precisely in discussing such concepts as liberty that Locke expects mistakes to happen.

The second reason for noting the chapter is the fact that in it occurs an interesting expose of a familiar misuse of the word faculty, and combined with it some thoughtful discussions of such words as "liberty," "will," and "understanding." "The ordinary way of speaking," he says,

is, that the understanding and will are two faculties of the mind; a word proper enough, if it be used as all words should be, so as not to breed confusion in men's thoughts, by being supposed (as I suspect it has been) to stand for some real beings in the soul that performed those actions of understanding and volition.²⁰

From this inexact use of language has come the result that faculties have been spoken of and represented as so many distinct agents. For it being asked, what it was that digested the meat in our stomachs? it was a ready, and very satisfactory answer, to say, that it was the digestive faculty. "What was it that made anything come out of the body?" The expulsive faculty. "What moved?" The motive faculty: and so in the mind, the intellectual faculty, or the understanding, understood; and the elective faculty, or the will, willed or commanded; which is, in short, to say that the ability to digest, digested; and the ability to move, moved: and the ability to understand, understood. For "faculty, ability, and power," I think, are but different names.

²⁰Ibid., II, xxi, 6, p. 166.
of the same things: which ways of speaking, when put into more intelligible words, will, I think, amount to thus much; that digestion is performed by something that is able to digest; motion, by something able to move; and understanding, by something able to understand. And in truth it would be very strange, if it should be otherwise; as strange as it would be for a man to be free without being able to be free. [Italics ours] 21

From this point onward, Locke's discussion of liberty and free will present no difficulties. For by a careful re-definition of terms the question itself is demonstrated to be meaningless,

I leave it to be considered, whether it may not help to put an end to that long agitated, and I think unreasonable, because unintelligible question, viz., whether man's will be free or no? For, if I mistake not, it follows, from what I have said, that the question itself is altogether improper; and it is as insignificant to ask whether man's will be free, as to ask whether his sleep be swift, or his virtue square . . . . [Italics ours] 22

To follow his discussion further would be outside the scope of our thesis. Nor need it concern us here that Locke's solution of the problem is not universally accepted.

21 Ibid., II, xxi, 20, p. 171.

22 Ibid., II, xxi, 14, p. 169.
CHAPTER IV

THE COMPLEX IDEAS

In addition to the simple ideas of various kinds and the simple modes Locke recognizes the existence of complex ideas which are combinations of various types based on the simple ideas. (Locke classes the simple modes also among the complex ideas, but inconsistently fails to include them in his discussions of the complex ideas, and it seems clear that he meant for them to be considered rather with the simple ideas than with the complex.) The complex ideas are divided into modes, substances and relations.

There are two types of modes, simple and mixed. The simple modes have already been discussed. The mixed modes are defined by Locke as

such combinations of simple ideas as are not looked upon to be characteristic marks of any real beings that have a steady existence, but scattered and independent ideas put together by the mind. [Italics ours]1

Examples are "obligation," "drunkenness," "a lie," "hypocrisy," "theft," "murder," "gratitude," "beauty." They are complex ideas existing only in the mind. They are fictions.

1John Locke, An Essay concerning Human Understanding, II, xxii, 1, p. 203.

40
For the connexion between the loose parts of those complex ideas being made by the mind this union, which has no particular foundation in nature, would cease again, were there not something that did, as it were, hold it together, and keep the parts from scattering. Though therefore, it be the mind that makes the collection, it is the name which is, as it were the knot that ties them fast together. [Italics ours]\(^2\)

This is "fiction" with a vengeance! These are the words for which Stewart Chase substitutes his "blubs," betraying thereby, perhaps, more knowledge of Korzybski than of Locke. They are the concepts which the philosophers of Laputa could not have carried in the packs of real things which they substituted in their conversation for words.

Besides the fictions, complex events are given labels of this type, almost as though they were given proper names, such as Mardi Gras. (From another standpoint it would be impossible to conceive of a proper name that did not name a complex event. But the important distinction in Locke's mind seems to be, not whether the event is complex, but whether it could be remembered at all without the name.)

What a vast variety of different ideas does the word triumphus hold together, and deliver to us as one species! Had this name been never made, or quite lost, we might, no doubt, have had descriptions of what passed in that solemnity; but yet, I think, that which holds those different parts together in the unity of one complex idea, is that very word annexed to it ... . How much, therefore, in mixed modes, the unity necessary to any essence depends on the mind, and how much the continuation and fixing of that unity depends on the name in common use annexed to it, I leave to be considered by those who look upon essences and species as real established things in nature.\(^3\)

\(^2\)Ibid., III, v, 10, p. 352. \(^3\)Ibid.
Interestingly enough, the need for symbolizing such complex festal events has been thought by some to have furnished the occasion for the beginning of language.⁴

Locke, however, sees in these situations the reason for semantic differences between languages and semantic change within each language. Thus he might have pointed out that the name for hari-kari would be characteristic only of the language of a people where that particular custom was prevalent.

Thus we see that killing a man with a sword, or a hatchet, are looked on as no distinct species of action: but if the point of the sword first enter the body it passes for a distinct species, where it has a distinct name, as in England, in whose language it is called "stabbing": but in another country, where it has not happened to be specified under a peculiar name, it passes not for a distinct species.⁵

This fact constitutes in Locke's mind a convincing argument against the philosophical realists.

A moderate skill in different languages will easily satisfy one of the truth of this; it being so obvious to observe great store of words in one language, which have not any that answer them in another; which plainly shows, that those of one country, by their customs and manner of life, have found occasion to make several complex ideas, and give names to them, which others never collected into specific ideas. This could not have happened, if these species were the steady workmanship of nature; and not collections made and abstracted by the mind, in order to naming, and for the convenience of communication. The terms of our law, which are not empty sounds, will hardly find words that answer them in the Spanish or Italian, no scanty languages; much

⁴See Susanne Langer, Philosophy in a New Key, Chapter 5.
⁵Locke, op. cit., III, v, 11, p. 353.
less, I think, could any one translate them into the Caribbee or Westoe tongues; and the versura of the Romans, or corban of the Jews, have no words in other languages to answer them; the reason whereof is plain from what has been said.⁶

There is another argument which proves equally that these species are not the "steady workmanship of nature":

If we will . . . exactly compare different languages, we shall find, that though they have words which, in translations and dictionaries, are supposed to answer one another; yet there is scarce one of ten, amongst the names of complex ideas, especially of mixed modes, that stands for the same precise idea which the word does that in dictionaries it is rendered by. There are no ideas more common, and less compounded, than the measures of time, extension, and weight, and the Latin names, hora, pes, libra, are without difficulty, rendered by the English names, "hour," "foot," and "pound": but yet there is nothing more evident, than that the ideas a Roman annexed to these Latin names were very far different from those which an Englishman expresses by those English ones . . . . We shall find this much more so in the names of more abstract and compounded ideas; such as are the greatest part of those which make up moral discourses.⁷

Excellent examples would be the concepts of virtue and piety. It is to be regretted that Locke did not have at his disposal the materials which have since been gathered by philologists and literary critics, for so close was he to our concept of semantic change within the individual language that only the perspective of history is needed to complete the concept.

Hence also we may see the reason why languages constantly change, take up new and lay by old terms. Because change of customs and opinions bringing with it new combinations of ideas, which it is necessary frequently to think on and talk about, new names, to avoid

⁶Ibid., III, v, 8, p. 351. ⁷Ibid., p. 352.
long descriptions, are annexed to them, and so they become new species of complex modes.  

Although the mixed modes, being combinations of simple ideas, are based in a way upon experience, they are concepts which do not have to be experienced to be understood.  

Thus a man may come to have the idea of sacrilege or murder, by enumerating to him the simple ideas which these words stand for, without ever seeing either of them committed.  

There are two other ways in which the ideas of the mixed modes may come into our minds, by experience and by invention. "So he that first invented printing, or etching, had an idea of it in his mind before it ever existed." It is motion, thinking, and power, which, among the simple ideas, have been most modified. All action is comprehended in thinking and motion. If any modes of action are considered, "we shall find them but so many collections of simple ideas."  

Here again Locke notes in passing a frequent type of semantic error. For there are many words in common use which seem to signify action, and actually signify the effect.  

When a countryman says the cold freezes water, though the word "freezing" seems to import some action, yet truly it signifies nothing but the effect; viz.,

---

8Ibid., II, xxii, 7, p. 205.
9Ibid., II, xxii, 3, p. 204.
10Ibid., II, xxii, 9, p. 205.
11Ibid., II, xxii, 10, p. 207.
that water, that was before fluid, is become hard and consistent; without containing any idea of the action whereby it is done.\footnote{12}

Strangely enough, in the very sciences where there ought to be the least chance for such confusion to occur, it seems sometimes to occur most frequently. Thus "gravity" and "evolution," both of them clearly effects, are quite wrongly thought of as causes.

We must note one other of Locke's theories concerning the mixed modes, and that is that we generally learn the names of these ideas before we learn the ideas. In this they differ from simple ideas and substances, which are observed before their names are learned.

The second type of complex ideas discussed is the substances. When the conversation turns to "real things" the semanticist is apt to beam. Here, at least, we are secure from those infernal "fictions." Locke would be surprised by such naiveness. For the simple and mixed modes, the relations and many of the simple ideas can be known, since they are creations of the mind made at will; the simple ideas of sensation, likewise, are real in the sense that though their ultimate causes are unknown, yet they have a steady correspondence with the reality of things. So sure may we be of the existence of our thoughts that Berkeley can argue strongly that thought is the only reality.

\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, II, xxii, 11, p. 203.}
But when we speak of substances, we have no idea what we are talking about. Someone talking about substance would be compared by Locke with an Indian who, saying that the world was supported by a great elephant, was asked, what the elephant rested on? to which his answer was, "A great tortoise"; but being again pressed to know what gave support to the broad-backed tortoise, replied,—"SOMETHING, he knew not what." And so he compares us with children who answer with the word "something" (ours might say "because") when they have no idea of what they mean, nor do we know what we mean when we say "substance." The semanticist might possibly answer that the word substance is a fiction, as indeed it is, but that particular "substances" are real things whose properties are known. We shall see below how Locke disposes of such an argument.

All of our experience of substances, Locke points out, are gotten by collecting such combinations of simple ideas as are by experience and observation of men's senses taken notice of to exist together, and are therefore supposed to flow from the particular internal constitution or unknown essence of that substance. To the words "by experience and observation of men's senses" we should have to add "and through such tools as aid our senses," some of these tools being, in effect, new senses almost as much as extensions of the old. The validity of

13 Ibid., II, xxiii, 2, p. 209.
14 Ibid., II, xxiii, 3, p. 209.
sensory data is not affected, but the extent of data is vastly magnified. Thus Locke was acquainted with the microscope and telescope, but foresees that they will extend, rather than solve problems, no matter how they are improved.

His supposition that body, or matter, is distinguished by "the cohesion of solid, and consequently separable parts, and a power of communicating motion by impulse" although reasonable enough at that date no longer seems to fit the facts. But Locke had realized that such a theory was only "bare speculative truth." Only centuries can tell the fate of our most brilliant speculations of today. We certainly know vastly more than the scientists of his day (he was a fellow of the Royal Society himself), but his principles of evaluation of knowledge still seem pertinent.

It is through our simple sensory ideas that we get our threefold knowledge of substances: first, of the primary qualities, discoverable and undiscoverable, such as

the bulk, figure, number, situation, and motion of the parts of bodies which are really in them whether we take notice of them or no.\(^{15}\)

Secondly, of

the sensible secondary qualities which, depending on these, are nothing but the powers those substances have to produce several ideas in us by our senses; which ideas are not in the things themselves otherwise than as anything is in its cause.\(^{16}\)

Thirdly, of the ability of the substance to be altered:

\(^{15}\)Ibid., II, xxiii, 9, p. 212. \(^{16}\)Ibid.
The aptness we consider in any substance to give or receive such alterations of primary qualities as that the substance so altered should produce in us different ideas from what it did before; these are called "active and passive powers"; all which powers, as far as we have any notice or notion of them, terminated only in sensible simple ideas.17

Most of the latter Locke presumes we are unable to detect.

Just as Locke applies such simple modes as number to the simple ideas, so he applies them to substances, deriving what he calls "collective ideas of substances." Examples of substances to him were "man, horse, gold, violet, apple, &c." and of collective ideas of substances were such ideas as army, world, mountain. Time has necessitated a regrouping of these substances. To use his system of classification we should have to limit the substances to chemical substances and include under the collective ideas of substance such of his substances as man, horse, violet, and apple.

The last group of complex ideas is called relations. These arise from the consideration of two ideas, or groups of ideas in some sort of comparison with each other. The actual relationship must, in Locke's theory, be between two ideas, although, presumably, the ideas could be complex enough to include as one idea a large context.

Relationships are often more easily formed than are ideas of the subjects related. Thus we would have difficulty forming an adequate idea of either Charles II or James II, but we have no difficulty in understanding that they were related as brothers.

17Ibid.
Among Locke's theories of relations are these: The same object may be involved in many relationships;¹⁸ relationships are all based upon simple ideas of sensation and reflection;¹⁹ any term leading the mind beyond the subject denominated is relative.²⁰ Thus words like man, black, merry, thoughtful, are considered absolute by Locke, but husband, blacker, merrier, are considered relative. Many of the terms Locke considered absolute we should undoubtedly consider relative at least to some extent, as for example black must be recognized to have a relative as well as an absolute meaning. Indeed, even in the darkness of a cave our imaginations would probably prevent our seeing absolute blackness. (Such an absence of stimulation is considered by Locke as real an idea as the presence would be.)²¹

Locke points out the confusion that arises from mistaking relative terms for absolute. Such seemingly absolute terms are "old, great, and imperfect." These relative terms are even turned into substantives. Father is such a relative term turned substantive, and applies, Locke argues, only so long as the relationship continues.²²

¹⁸Ibid., II, xxv, 7, p. 236.
¹⁹Ibid., II, xxv, 9, p. 237.
²⁰Ibid., II, xxv, 10, p. 237.
²¹Ibid., II, viii, 1-6, pp. 33-34.
²²Ibid., II, xxv, 3 and 5, p. 235.
Among the more important relationships are cause and effect, relationships of time (even those we think of as absolute, such as 1949), of place and extension, identity and diversity, proportion, and natural, instituted or legal, and moral relationships.

Locke notes such types of law as the divine law, the civil law, and philosophical law, which is the law of opinion or reputation. Thus crime is criminal only in relationship to the civil law, and virtue and vice usually mean nothing more than a relationship to the law of opinion, although many persons may insist upon the divine origin of their opinions.23

We may not close the discussion of ideas without recognizing that Locke's classification is probably faulty in at least one very important respect. For Locke is an atomist rather than a Gestaltist. But on the theory of the tabula rasa, or the denial of innate ideas, both atomism and gestalt theory are forms of abstraction. For at the time that the senses begin to write on the white sheet of paper which is the mind at birth (or shortly before birth, perhaps, Locke suggests) they must write experiences of a total nature, rather than either a formed nature or an atomistic nature. From this total experience, apparently, the child learns to select, or abstract a pattern of experience. Perhaps such a

23Ibid., II, xxviii, 7 f., pp. 230 f.
stimulus as a blue ceiling, such as one may see delighting an infant, may enter the child's mind as a simple idea of color. But equally likely some objects among the first experienced enter as complete configurations, such as mother or rattles. In the absence of a dependable way of deciding the question we are forced to guess and reason. Similarly, language is probably not "built" of words, but words probably are more often learned as the undefined part of a sentence of which both the rest of the meaning and the whole meaning are known. Words are derived from sentences, rather than sentences from words. Persons with large vocabularies have not had each word explained to them before learning it. If definition were indispensable, few men would have had the energy to learn the language. Yet, though not first discovered, simple ideas and words may to some extent serve as atoms.
CHAPTER V

ABSTRACTION

The process of abstraction, one of the simple ideas of reflection, requires special treatment, involving as it does several ideas and an element of controversy. Furthermore, in this specific field perhaps more than in any other Locke has been attacked.

If one considers the series "Socrates, Greek, human, animal, life," one sees that each term in the series represents a higher order of abstraction: that is, in each succeeding term some of the specific qualities associated with the preceding term have been selected and others omitted so that more individual terms may be included. This is one type of abstraction, and legitimate enough, according to the modern semanticist, if the term "Greek" is consciously referred to the thousands of individuals of exceedingly various characters and not simply treated in some such way as the word "wop," as though all "wops" were similar in all respects, being all dirty, all smelling of garlic. The same caution applies equally and progressively to the other terms of the series.

Now let us consider the series "white cat, white paint, white marble, white ball, white chalk." An abstraction of
this series would perhaps class all as "white objects." The abstraction would be more difficult if such terms as "white vinegar" and "white race" were added. But it would be dangerous to make an abstraction of the series and derive from it the term "whiteness." It would be dangerous, for it might lead one to suppose that an object "whiteness" exists, some standard stored somewhere as a standard meter-stick is stored in Washington, London, Paris, or some such real place. Centuries, milleniums of man hours have been squandered looking for such qualities as heat and heaviness, as something existing outside of hot or heavy objects. Even though Diogenes used the wrong kind of lantern, at least he was wise enough to be looking for an honest man and not for honesty!

It would be easy to find passages in Locke to prove him guilty of believing in the existence of "universals" of this type. However, it is not too much to say that Berkeley was unfair to Locke in this matter, and that a casual reading of the wrong passages of Locke would not fairly give his final verdict. For Locke does seem sometimes to bandy about terms of the type we know as fictions, as in the passage

It is past doubt that men have in their mind several ideas, such as are those expressed by the words, "whiteness, hardness, sweetness, thinking, motion, man, elephant, army, drunkenness," and others.1

On this matter of abstraction Locke has been roundly attacked, as for instance, by Berkeley in this famous passage:

To give the reader a yet clearer view of the nature of abstract ideas, and the uses they are thought necessary to, I shall add one more passage out of the Essay on Human Understanding, which is as follows:—'Abstract ideas are not so obvious or easy to children, or the yet unexercised mind, as particular ones. If they seem so to grown men, it is only because by constant and familiar use they are made so. For, when we nicely reflect upon them, we shall find that general ideas are fictions and contrivances of the mind, that carry difficulty with them, and do not so easily offer themselves as we are apt to imagine. For example, does it not require some pains and skill to form the general idea of a triangle (which is yet none of the most abstract, comprehensive, and difficult); for it must be neither oblique nor rectangle, neither equilateral, equirrural, nor scalenon; but all and none of these at once? In effect, it is something imperfect, that cannot exist . . . .'

If any man has the faculty of framing in his mind such an idea of a triangle as is here described, it is in vain to pretend to dispute him out of it, nor would I go about it. All I desire is that the reader would fully and certainly inform himself whether he has such an idea or no. And this, methinks, can be no hard task for any one to perform. What more easy than for any one to look a little into his own thoughts, and there try whether he has, or can attain to have, an idea that shall correspond with the description that is here given of the general idea of a triangle—which is neither oblique nor rectangle, equilateral, equirrural nor scalenon, but all and none of these at once? 

On the contrary, Berkeley argues,

If we will annex a meaning to our words, and speak only of what we can conceive, I believe we shall acknowledge that an idea, which considered in itself is particular, becomes general by being made to represent or stand for all other particular ideas of the same sort.

---


3Ibid., Introduction, p. 12.
a plausible explanation until one asks what Berkeley means by a "sort." In the presence of this visible darkness let us see whether anything may be said in Locke's defense.

In the first place, Locke is trying to describe, not moralize. We do have in our minds a host of ill-defined, abstract ideas which are certainly not in themselves particular things. Very likely, Berkeley is right that we ought to "speak only of what we can conceive." But as a matter of fact this is not what happens, and Locke is trying to find out what happens before prescribing cures for the evils raised. In this respect the modern semanticists generally follow Berkeley, but in so doing they cannot hope to have Locke's completeness any more than Berkeley did.

In the second place, these processes are described as being performed by the mind. They make no pretence of changing, or even conforming to "things as they are." Indeed, there is no harm in them where they are useful, except as the results of abstraction are mistaken carelessly for real existences.

In the third place, it is only through these processes that language becomes possible. There are two arguments for this. The first is that languages actually are made up largely of "general terms" as Locke calls the words applied to abstractions.
All things that exist being particulars, it may perhaps be thought reasonable that words, which ought to be conformed to things, should be so too. I mean in their signification; but yet we find the quite contrary. The far greatest part of words, that make all languages, are general terms; which has not been the effect of neglect or chance, but of reason and necessity.  

The second argument may well be understood through a paragraph from Ogden and Richards:

In discussing the way in which we interpret sensations in terms of an external world, Helmholtz has occasion to point out that the multiplicity of the optical signs which we use is such that we need not be surprised at the variety and complexity of the news which they give us. The elementary signs of language are only 26 letters. If out of these 26 letters we can get the whole of literature and science, the 250,000 optic nerve fibres can be relied on for an even richer and more finely graded knowledge.

That is, the data received through even one single sense are so infinitely varied that through no stretch of the imagination could sounds be devised to identify every possible permutation. Thus Locke argues,

First, it is impossible that every particular thing should have a distinct peculiar name. For the signification and use of words depending on that connexion which the mind makes between its ideas and the sounds it uses as signs of them, it is necessary, in the application of names to things, that the mind should have distinct ideas of the things, and retain also the particular name that belongs to every one, with its peculiar appropriation to that idea. But it is beyond the power of human capacity to frame and retain distinct ideas of all the particular things we meet with; every bird and beast men saw, every tree and plant that affected the senses, could not find a place in the most capacious understanding. If it be looked on as an instance of a prodigious memory, that some generals have been able to call every soldier in

---

4 Locke, op. cit., III, iii, 1, p. 326.
their army by his proper name, we may easily find a reason why men have never attempted to give names to each sheep in their flock, or crow that flies over their heads; much less to call every leaf of plants or grain of sand that came in their way by a peculiar name.

Secondly, if it were possible, it would yet be useless, because it would not serve to the chief end of language. Men would in vain heap up names of particular things, that would not serve them to communicate their thoughts. Men learn names, and use them in talk with others, only that they may be understood; which is then only done when, by use or consent, the sound I make by the organs of speech excites, in another man's mind who hears it, the idea I apply it to in mine when I speak it. This cannot be done by names applied to particular things, whereof I alone having the ideas in my mind, the names of them could not be significant or intelligible to another who was not acquainted with all those very particular things which had fallen under my notice. 6

For a still further reductio ad absurdum Locke would have had to point out only that the symbols themselves vary in pronunciation, that is, that they also are subject to a generalizing process by which many particular pronunciations are understood in terms of an ideal pronunciation. For this factor has been a potent factor in producing semantic change over long periods. But even granting all these things, Locke continues,

yet a distinct name for every particular thing would not be of any great use for the improvement of knowledge; which, though founded in particular things, enlarges itself by general views. 7

Our language is, then, married to abstraction for better or for worse. Language, after all, as shown in the preceding

7 Ibid., III, iii, 4, p. 327.
chapter, should not pretend to give a very exact description of either Locke's objects or ideas, Kant's phenomena or his noumena.

In the fourth place, Locke was as aware as any of the moderns that the products of abstraction are not real beings but fictions:

It is plain, by what has been said, that general and universal belong not to the real existence of things, but are the inventions and creatures of the understanding, made by it for its own use and concern only signs, whether words or ideas.8

Indeed, he prefaces the very passage which Berkeley seizes upon to take him to task with the remark

When we nicely reflect upon them, we shall find that general ideas are fictions and contrivances of the mind, that carry difficulty with them, and do not so easily offer themselves as we are apt to imagine. [Italics ours]9

In the fifth place, all of our nouns except the proper names are to some extent abstractions. Thus "gold" is as truly an abstraction as "Greek" or "human" in the illustration above. Is there then an essential "goldness" in what we call gold? Of this we are "incurably ignorant."

For how can we be sure that this or that quality is in gold, when we know not what is or is not gold? since in this way of speaking nothing is gold but what partakes of an essence, which we not knowing cannot know where it is or is not, and so cannot be sure that any parcel of matter in the world is or is not in this sense gold; being incurably ignorant whether it has or has not that which makes any thing to be called "gold," i.e., that real essence of gold whereof we have no idea at all: this

8Ibid., III, iii, 10, p. 330.
9Ibid., IV, vii, 9, p. 509.
being as impossible for us to know, as it is for a blind 
man to tell in what flower the colour of a pansy is or 
is not to be found, whilst he has no idea of the colour 
of a pansy at all. [Italics ours]^{10}

Locke draws a careful distinction between abstract gen-
eral essences and real essences as is evident from the follow-
ing two extracts from his letters answering objections of the 
Bishop of Worcester:

This, as I understand it is to prove, that the ab-
stract general essence of any sort of things, or things 
of the same denomination, e.g., of man or marigold, hath 
a real being out of the understanding, which, I confess, 
I am not able to conceive.^{11}

but

That every individual substance has a real, internal, 
individual constitution, i.e., a real essence, that makes 
it to be what it is, I readily grant. Upon this your 
lordship says, 'Peter, James, and John are all true and 
real men.' Answer. Without doubt, supposing them to be 
men, they are 'true and real men,' i.e., supposing the 
name of that species belongs to them. And so three 
bobaques are all true and real bobaques, supposing the 
name of that species of animals belongs to them.

For I beseech your lordship to consider, whether, 
in your way of arguing, by naming them Peter, James and 
John, names familiar to us as appropriated to individuals 
of the species man, your lordship does not first suppose 
them men, and then very safely ask, whether they be not 
all 'true and real men'?^{12}

The real essence, then, is in the object, and the ab-
stract general essence is in the mind. Of the nature of the 
real essence we know nothing (Berkeley was able to argue that 
it was the perception itself) and of the abstract general

^{10}bid., IV, vi, 5, p. 497.  ^{11}bid., Note, p. 336.

^{12}bid., Note, p. 337.
essence we know that it is our own creation, for our own convenience, and that it is extremely unlikely that it has any relationship to the real essence except by coincidence.

We see that Locke's thinking on this subject is at once complex and common-sense, that though he may easily be misunderstood, or ridiculed for an isolated remark, his work constitutes a profound explanation of language as we use it, and the extent of the correspondence of words with reality. This is, after all, the purpose of semantics, rather than the false function it often assumes of attacking abstraction because it is abstract, which, as has been pointed out, if carried to its logical end simply destroys language.
CHAPTER VI

LOCKE'S THEORY OF DEFINITION

Since by their very nature all of our ideas are either simple ideas or combinations of these simple ideas, Locke reasons, all of our compound ideas may be explained, or defined in terms of our simple ideas. But no such explanation of the simple ideas is possible. These are the atoms of thought and indivisible.

The names of simple ideas are not capable of any definitions; the names of all complex ideas are. It has not, that I know, hitherto been taken notice by any body, what words are, and what are not, capable of being defined; the want whereof is (as I am apt to think) not seldom the occasion of great wrangling and obscurity in men's discourses.¹

Let us see what Korzybski has to say on this subject.

All linguistic schemes, if analyzed far enough, would depend on a set of undefined terms. If we enquire about the 'meaning' of a word, we find that it depends on the 'meaning' of other words used in defining it, and that the eventual new relations posited between them ultimately depend on the multi-ordinal meanings of the undefined terms, which, at a given period, cannot be elucidated any further.²

He proposes the following experiment:

We begin by asking the 'meaning' of every word uttered, being satisfied for this purpose with the roughest definitions; then we ask the 'meaning' of the

²Alfred Korzybski, Science and Sanity, p. 21.
words used in the definitions, and this process is continued usually for no more than ten to fifteen minutes, until the victim begins to speak in circles—as, for instance, defining 'space' by 'length' and 'length' by 'space'. When this stage is reached, we have come usually to the undefined terms of a given individual. If we still press, no matter how gently, for definitions, a most interesting fact occurs. Sooner or later, signs of affective disturbances appear. Often the face reddens; there is a bodily restlessness; sweat appears—symptoms quite similar to those seen in a schoolboy who has forgotten his lesson, which he 'knows but cannot tell' . . . 3

We recall Korzybski's statement that since Locke "did not take into consideration structure, and semantic reactions . . . his arguments were, in general, non-operative." It is quite true that Locke did not discuss semantic reactions, if by such discussion is meant the medical jargon of symptoms, blood-pressure, and the like. Locke, we must remember, was a physician, but our gratitude must go out to him for not introducing learning irrelevant to the subject, especially, since by the nature of physica such learning is "bare speculative truth."

But why, we would ask Korzybski, was the Essay written if Locke was ignorant of semantic reactions? We recall that the five or six friends had found themselves "at a stand" in their discussions. After they had puzzled themselves, without coming to a resolution of the doubts that perplexed them, Locke conceived the idea of the inquiry which eventuated in the book. Do not the words "puzzled," "doubts," and "perplexed" indicate semantic reactions? And the "wrangling,"

3Ibid., p. 21.
"disputation," and "controversy" which result from poor use of words, are these not "semantic reactions"? Is Locke to be condemned because in his age one talked of becoming angry instead of colloidal chemistry?

As to structure, what is language in Locke's system if not a structure in which complex ideas are built from simple ideas? We suspect that Korzybski's study of Locke is as inadequate as his study of Aristotle and Plato.

As to the victim speaking in circles, the following are some of Locke's thoughts on the subject:

I will not here trouble myself to prove that all terms are not definable, from that progress, in infinitum, which it will visibly lead us into if we should allow that all names could be defined. For if the terms of one definition were still to be defined by another, where at last should we stop? But I shall, from the nature of our ideas, and the significations of our words, show why some names can, and others cannot, be defined, and which they are.4

We are in need, in the first place, of a definition of a definition, which Locke supplies in the following words:

I think it is agreed, that a definition is nothing else but "the showing the meaning of one word by several other not synonymous terms."5

As we have seen, the several others not synonymous must, in the nature of the structure of language, be simpler terms than the word defined. When the attempt is made to define a word which already applies to a simple idea, what Locke described as "that eminent trifling in the schools" takes place.

5Ibid., III, iv, 6, p. 342.
What more exquisite jargon could the wit of man invent than this definition?—"The act of a being in power, as far forth as in power"; which would puzzle any rational man, to whom it was not already known by its famous absurdity, to guess what word it could ever be supposed to be the explication of . . . .

Nor have the modern philosophers, who have endeavored to throw off the jargon of the schools and speak intelligibly, much better succeeded in defining simple ideas, whether by explaining their causes, or any otherwise. The atomists, who define motion to be "a passage from one place to another," what do they more than put one synonymous word for another? For what is "passage" other than motion? And if they were asked what "passage" was, how would they better define it than by "motion"? For is it not at least as proper and significant to say, "Passage is a motion from one place to another," as to say, "Motion is a passage?" &c. This is to translate, and not to define. 6

But there is no more gained, Locke continues, in definition by explaining the causes of an idea:

Those who tell us, that light is a great number of little globules striking briskly on the bottom of the eye, speak more intelligibly than the schools; but yet these words, ever so well understood, would make the idea the word "light" stands for, no more known to a man that understands it not before, than if one should tell him that light was nothing but a company of little tennis-balls, which fairies all day long struck with rackets against some men's foreheads, whilst they passed by others . . . . For the cause of any sensation, and the sensation itself, in all the simple ideas of one sense, are two ideas . . . . And therefore should Des Cartes's globules strike ever so long on the retina of a man who was blind by a gutta serena, he would thereby never have any idea of light, or anything approaching to it, though he understood what little globules were, and what striking on another body was, ever so well. 7

Ultimately, then, since words are marks of ideas, and the simple ideas come by experience, and through them the

---

6Ibid., III, iv, 8 and 9, pp. 342 f.
7Ibid., III, iv, 10, p. 343.
complex ideas, the words applied to the simple ideas are
definable only in terms of experience and not in terms of
words, which come later in the scheme of things. Locke
admits that, as in the case of "passage" and "motion," trans-
lation may help a person understand a word, but it does not
constitute definition. Some words are undefinable, just as
the realities which they represent are unknowable, despite
Korzybski to the contrary. We recall Locke’s myth about the
Indian, the elephant, and the tortoise. 8

Locke’s theory of definition is better adapted to telling
us the denotations of words than their connotations. (Perhaps
this weakness is allied to his contempt for poetry.) For a
total understanding of the meaning of a word cannot come
through understanding simply of the definition of the term but
must rather be a functional understanding. The following
clarifying discussion occurs in Philosophy in a New Key:

There is in fact no quality of meaning; its essence
lies in the realm of logic, where one does not deal with
qualities, but only with relations. It is not fair to
say: "Meaning is a relation," for that suggests too simple
a business. Most people think of a relation as a two-
termed affair—"a-in-relation-to-b"; but meaning involves
several terms, and different types of meaning consist of
different types and degrees of relationship. It is better,
perhaps to say; "Meaning is not a quality, but a function
of a term." A function is a pattern viewed with reference
to one special term round which it centers; this pattern
emerges when we look at the given term in its total re-
lation to the other terms about it. The total may be
quite complicated. For instance a musical chord may be
treated as a function of one note, known as the "written

8 See note 13, Chapter IV.
bass," by writing this one note and indicating its relation to all the other notes that are to go above it.

In old organ music, the chord would be written: \( \begin{array}{c} \text{2} \\ \text{9} \\ \text{3} \end{array} \), which means: "The A-chord with the sixth, the fourth and the third notes above A." The chord is treated as a pattern surrounding and including A. It is expressed as a function of A.

The meaning of a term is, likewise, a function; it rests on a pattern, in which the term itself holds the key-position. Even in the simplest kinds of meaning there must be at least two other things related to the term that "means"—an object that is "meant," and a subject who uses the term; just as in a chord there must be at least two notes besides the "written bass" to determine what the chord is (one of these may be merely "understood" by musicians, but without it the combination would not be a determinate chord). The same may be said for a term with a meaning; the existence of a subject is often tacitly accepted, but if there is not at least one thing meant and one mind for which it is meant, then there is not a complete meaning—only a partial pattern which might be completed in different ways.

Any term in a pattern may be taken as a key-term to which the others are related. For instance, the chord \( \begin{array}{c} \text{2} \\ \text{9} \\ \text{3} \end{array} \) may be regarded as a function of its lowest note and expressed by the description \( \begin{array}{c} \text{2} \\ \text{5} \end{array} \); or it may be treated with reference to the note on which it is built harmonically, which happens to be D. A musician analyzing the harmony would call this chord "the second inversion of the seventh-chord on the dominant, in the key of G." The "dominant" of that key is D, not A. He would treat the whole pattern as a function of D; that sounds more complicated than the other treatment, which fixed the notes from the A upward, but of course it is not really so, because it comes to just the same pattern.

Similarly, we may view a meaning-pattern from the point of view of any term in it, and our descriptions of the same pattern will differ accordingly. We may say that
a certain symbol "means" an object to a person, or that the person "means" the object by the symbol. The first description treats meaning in the logical sense, the second in the psychological sense. The former takes the symbol as the key, and the latter the subject. So the two most controversial kinds of meaning—the logical and the psychological—are distinguished and at the same time related to each other, by the general principle of viewing meaning as a function, not a property, of terms.  

Though this explanation of meaning does not deny the validity of Locke's theory of definition as a special case, it seems undeniably a more valid and far more comprehensive treatment of the problem. Only by the familiarity with the use of a term functionally in many contexts do we arrive at an adequate understanding of connotations. This concept has been expressed by Richards in the words, "What the sign or word ... means is the missing parts of the context." Thus, though we undoubtedly learn the meanings of many words through definition, particularly through the dictionary, yet we cannot say that we have actually gotten more than clues to the full meaning in such a way. It is functionally that we have acquired most of our knowledge of meanings. And so our children often surprise us by learning words which they have not been taught. Indeed, in no other way could they acquire that first vocabulary which makes formal definition possible.

In general, then, Locke is not lacking in the concept of structure, but has a tendency to be mistaken how our knowledge

---

9Susanne Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key*, pp. 44 f.

10I. A. Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, p. 34.
of the structure arises. We see in him the remains of the attitude of the early Greeks who were looking for the material from which things are constructed. And so, Locke finds in simple ideas the materials of which our knowledge is constructed. Does this then carry the implication that Locke thought we respond to situations in terms of their simple ideas? Interestingly enough, it does not. For throughout the Essay we see that names are given to total situations. Thus, in his speculations about the origins of language we find the following:

Let us suppose Adam in the state of a grown man, with a good understanding, but in a strange country, with all things new and unknown about him; and no other faculties to attain the knowledge of them but what one of this age has now. He observes Lamech more melancholy than usual, and imagines it to be from a suspicion he has of his wife Adah, . . . that she has too much kindness for another man. Adam discourses these thoughts to Eve, . . . and in these discourses with Eve he makes use of these two new words, kimeah and niquuh, . . . the one standing for suspicion in a husband of his wife's disloyalty to him, and the other for the act of committing disloyalty.11

Plainly, Adam is not pictured as reacting to the simple ideas, but to the situation as a whole. We may see the same attitude at other points of the Essay.

In the main, however, we must consider Locke in error on this point, although less dogmatically so than some of the later schools of psychology have been.

Although simple ideas are undefinable, they are our most fixed ideas.

Though the names of simple ideas have not the help of definition to determine their signification, yet that hinders not but that they are generally less doubtful and uncertain than those of mixed modes and substances; because they standing only for one simple perception, men, for the most part, easily and perfectly agree in their signification, and there is little room for mistake and wrangling about their meaning. ¹²

For, as Korzybski observes, although we are unable to define the terms upon which our thinking rests, we nevertheless do not distrust our ideas of them, but are like the schoolboy who "knows but cannot tell."

¹²Ibid., III, iv, 15, p. 346.
CHAPTER VII

EVALUATION OF IDEAS

Locke applies four types of criteria to ideas. They may be clear and distinct, or obscure and confused, real or fantastical, adequate and inadequate, and true or false.

Ideas are clear "when they are such as the objects themselves, from whence they were taken, did or might, in a well-ordered sensation or perception, present them."

They become obscure as they fade in the memory. It is also possible for ideas to be obscure through deficient sensory mechanism, or an inability of the mind to retain them as received.

If the organs or faculties of perception, like wax over-hardened with cold, will not receive the impression of the seal, from the usual impulse wont to imprint it; or, like wax of a temper too soft, will not hold it well when well imprinted; or else supposing the wax of a temper fit, but the seal not applied with a sufficient force to make a clear impression; in any of these cases, the print left by the seal will be obscure. This, I suppose, needs no application to make it plainer.

Ideas may also be distinct or confused. An idea, being what it is, is of necessity distinct, that is, different from all others. However, an idea becomes confused when "it is such that it may as well be called by another name as that which it is expressed by." The theory here is that some shade of

---

2Ibid., II, xxix, 3, p. 290. 3Ibid., II, xxix, 6, p. 290.

70
meaning has been left out of the idea. Thus, *fatherly* and *paternal* have similar meanings but with a slight difference. A confused idea is one that overlooks such a difference.

Confusion may come about in three ways. The complex idea may be composed of too few simple ideas, or the arrangement of the simple ideas may be disorderly, or the idea may be what Ogden and Richards call a *Nomad*, or Locke a *Vagrant*, that is, an idea that does not stay fixed with a definite meaning.

Complex ideas may be distinct in part and confused in part. This would be impossible in a simple idea. As an example Locke cites the idea of the figure of a chiliaedron, which is a body of a thousand sides. We have a clear idea of a thousand as a number, Locke observes (rightly or wrongly), but we would probably fail to distinguish between the thousand-sided figure and a similar one of nine hundred ninety-nine sides.⁴

Under the discussion of the simple modes we noted some discussion of infinites. Such ideas as eternity and infinity, and infinite divisibility are markedly confused ideas.

Having frequently in our mouths the name "eternity," we are apt to think we have a positive comprehensive idea of it; which is as much as to say, that there is no part of that duration which is not clearly contained in our idea. It is true, that he that thinks so may have a clear idea of duration; he may also have a very clear idea of a very great length of duration; he may also

⁴Ibid., II, xxix, 13-14, p. 294.
have a clear idea of the comparison of that great one with still a greater; but it not being possible for him to include in his idea of any duration, let it be as great as it will, the whole extent together of a duration where he supposes no end, that part of his idea, which is still beyond the bounds of that large duration he represents to his own thoughts, is very obscure and undetermined. And hence it is that in disput and reasonings concerning eternity, or any other infinite, we are apt to blunder and involve ourselves in manifest absurdities."

The situation is parallel, but even more liable to error when we talk of infinite divisibility. "It returns, as all our ideas of infinite do, at last to that of number always to be added; but thereby never amounts to any distinct idea of actual, infinite parts." Perhaps we may say that if the idea has any value it is because of its indistinctness. Ideas may, in the second place, be either real or fantastical. Real ideas are those which "have a foundation in nature." They "conform with the real being and existence of things, or with their archetypes." Fantastical ideas, or "chimerical" ideas, have no such foundation in nature or conformity to the real being of things."

All of our simple ideas are considered real, whether primary or secondary. The ideas of primary qualities are taken by Locke to have an actual correspondence with reality. The ideas of secondary qualities have their reality "lying in

5Ibid., II, xxix, 15, p. 294.
6Ibid., II, xxix, 16, p. 295.
7Ibid., II, xxx, 1, p. 297.
that steady correspondence they have with the distinct constitutions of real beings. But whether they answer to those constitutions, as to causes or patterns, it matters not; it suffices that they are constantly produced by them.\(^8\)

Locke's next sentence is of interest because of the appearance in it of the word **fictions** which is generally associated with Bentham.

And thus our simple ideas are all real and true, because they answer and agree to those powers of things which produce them in our minds, that being all that is requisite to make them real, and not fictions at pleasure.\(^9\)

The mixed modes are creations of the mind. "These ideas, being themselves archetypes, cannot differ from their archetypes, and so cannot be chimerical, unless anyone will jumble together in them inconsistent ideas."\(^10\) As they are related to words, however, they are peculiarly subject to being fantastical, in the sense that one's idea may be entirely different from the generally accepted meaning of the word.

Ideas of substances are real when they agree with the existence of things, fantastical when ideas are joined together which do not exist together in nature, as, for example, a horse's body joined to a man's torso.

The third evaluation of ideas considers them adequate or inadequate. Those which are adequate completely represent

\(^{8}\text{Ibid.}, II, xxx, 2, p. 297.\)

\(^{9}\text{Ibid.}\)

\(^{10}\text{Ibid.}, II, xxx, 4, p. 298.\)
their archetypes. "Inadequate ideas are such which are but a partial or incomplete representation of those archetypes to which they are referred."11

Simple ideas are all adequate, for each sensation is supposed to produce only one simple idea. The modes are also all adequate, except that when we use as referents not our own idea but the idea which we believe someone else is associating with a word, we may mistake the other person's idea, and our idea may be inadequate to that referent.

Since it is impossible for us to know the "real essence" of any substance, all of our ideas of substances must be inadequate when referred to the real being of things. But our ideas of substances as collections of their qualities are also inadequate, for our complex ideas of the substances are simplifications of the things themselves, emphasizing some of the characteristics and neglecting others. Only as we know the essence of something, as we do of mathematical figures, can we hope to have an adequate idea of it. But this is plainly impossible for us to know of substances.

The simple ideas, then, are adequate copies, the substances inadequate copies, and the mixed modes not being copies but creations are adequate.

The fourth evaluation of ideas asks whether they are true or false, or as Locke adds, perhaps more properly right and

11 Ibid., II, xxxi, 1, p. 299.
wrong. No idea as an appearance in the mind can be judged to be true or false, for these words imply that a judgment has been passed. "The idea of a centaur has no more falsehood in it, when it appears in our minds, than the name "centaur" has falsehood in it, when it is pronounced by our mouths, or written on paper."\textsuperscript{12}

But when we refer our ideas to something they may be true or false, as when we refer our idea to the idea some one else has when he uses the word "liberty," when we refer our ideas to a real existence, or to a real essence.

Locke points out that when the mind gets a new idea, it first abstracts it and then names it. The idea may then be easily remembered. But, and here is the triangle of reference of Ogden and Richards making an appearance,

\textit{this abstract idea being something in the mind between the thing that exists, and the name that is given to it, it is in our ideas that both the rightness of our knowledge, and the propriety or intelligibleness of our speaking, consists. And hence it is that men are so forward to suppose that the abstract ideas they have in their minds are such as agree to the things existing without them, to which they are referred; and are the same also to which the names they give them do, by the use and propriety of that language, belong. For, without this double conformity of their ideas, they find they should both think amiss of things in themselves, and talk of them unintelligibly to others.}\textsuperscript{13}

The simple ideas are the ones least apt to be falsely referred. Locke might, perhaps, be disputed on this point, but he thinks that there is a minimal danger of people

\textsuperscript{12}Ibid., II, xxxii, 3, p. 307.
\textsuperscript{13}Ibid., II, xxxii, 8, p. 308.
disagreeing on their ideas of such ideas as green or bitter. Very likely, however, people do often disagree on such ideas, the first for example, because of color blindness, and the second because of confusion with other terms like sour.

The ideas most liable to be false to their referents are the mixed modes. Such ideas as justice are so complex that the word can hardly mean the same to everyone. As Socrates showed, most of us solve the problem by never giving a single fixed meaning to such a word, or any meaning at all, unless we are pressed. However, when we use no referent for an idea of this sort, it cannot be false. It is only linguistically that such an idea can be false, because then it takes as a referent someone else’s idea.

The ideas of substances are false when they take the real essence for a referent, when they add an extraneous idea to true ideas of the substance, or when they are inadequate.

Ideas, then, though not in themselves true or false, may become false by being referred incorrectly to another man’s idea, by being judged to agree with real existence when they do not, when incorrectly judged adequate, or when they are judged to represent a real essence.
CHAPTER VIII

PARTICLES

No word occupies a more important position in semantic discussion than the word \textit{is}. Vernon Lee devotes a chapter to this word, discussing four of its meanings.\textsuperscript{1} Likewise, Santayana has written a chapter (strictly speaking, an article) discussing seven of its meanings.\textsuperscript{2} Such a discussion will not be found in Locke's \textit{Essay} and one might conclude therefore that the thought that \textit{is} has a diversity of meanings is a new one. The importance of definition of the word \textit{is} is very large in a full discussion of language and if it is missing in Locke's treatment, it is a serious deficiency. Yet on examination it proves to be not missing but disguised. For not only Locke's work but philosophy in general is full of discussion of the various meanings, not of \textit{is}, but of \textit{isness}, that is, \textit{essence, being, entity}, and other variants and translations of the verb to be. In addition, such words as \textit{existence} and \textit{reality} carry closely related meanings. Thus, the thought of Santayana is related, as we should expect, to the field of philosophy rather than to the comparatively

\textsuperscript{1}See Vernon Lee, \textit{Language Habits in Human Affairs}, Chapter XI.

\textsuperscript{2}George Santayana, \textit{Obiter Scripta}, "Some Meanings of the Word \textit{Is}!"
limited field of semantics. If Locke's Essay, and, in particular, the third book are reexamined for disguised discussion of the meanings of is, such thought will prove not lacking. Yet, it will be apparent that Locke is not inventing relationships but simply expressing his opinions on controversies of thousands of years' standing.

However, in one respect Locke did perhaps influence the modern discussion of the word is. For in his very brief chapter on particles he has shown that the humblest words are too often taken for granted. In the correct use of the particles, he believes, "consists the art of well speaking ... To mistake in any of these is to puzzle, instead of informing his hearer."3 Nevertheless, the part of grammar dealing with particles has, he points out,

been, perhaps, as much neglected as some others over-diligently cultivated. It is easy for men to write, one after another, of cases and genders, moods and tenses, gerunds and supines; in these and the like, there has been great diligence used; and particles themselves, in some languages, have been, with great show of exactness, ranked into their several orders. But though "prepositions" and "conjunctions," &c., are names well known in grammar, and the particles contained under them carefully ranked into their distinct subdivisions; yet he who would show the right use of particles, and what significance and force they have, must take a little more pains, enter into his own thoughts, and observe nicely the several postures of his mind in discoursing.4


We should expect the books on semantics to pay more attention to his warning and to be focusing considerable attention upon the particles. Yet such is not the case. To a surprising extent semantics limits itself to the consideration of nouns and verbs.

Anyone, however, who has done translating out of a foreign language knows what a great number of these mental postures may be represented by a single word. Thus, the Liddel and Scott Greek-English Lexicon (abridged) gives, among others, the following meanings of *epi* in only its prepositional use: "on," "upon," "at," "by," "near," "in," "deep," "before," "in presence of," "over," "set over," "towards," "for," "in the course of," "in time of," "opposite," "against," "after," "in addition," "over and above," "one on another," "for the purpose of," "with a view to," "with," "extending over," "among," "to," "in quest of," "up to," "nearly," "about," "during," and "till."

"Neither is it enough," says Locke, for the explaining of these words, to render them, as is usual in dictionaries, by words of another tongue which come nearest to their signification: for what is meant by them is commonly as hard to be understood in one as another language. They are all marks of some action, or intimation of the mind; and therefore to understand them rightly, the several views, postures, stands, turns, limitations, and exceptions, and several other thoughts of the mind, for which we have either none or very deficient names, are diligently to be studied. Of these there is a great variety, much exceeding the number of particles that most languages
have to express them by; and therefore it is not to be wondered that most of these particles have divers, and sometimes almost opposite significations. In the Hebrew tongue there is a particle, consisting but of one single letter, of which there are reckoned up, as I remember, seventy, I am sure above fifty, several significations. 5

More difficulty is probably associated with the learning of these particles in a new language than with any other phase of language study. One wonders whether Basic English really simplifies the language, or whether, perhaps, it makes it harder to learn by throwing the work of so many verbs upon elusive particles which are already harder to learn. The idioms associated with particles often seem dishearteningly arbitrary.

Although Locke apparently felt it outside of the scope of his work to study the problem of particles in detail, he nevertheless left a single example of the type of study of particles which he felt necessary. Thus he points out,

"But" is a particle, none more familiar in our language; and he that says it is a discretive conjuction, and that it answers sed in Latin, or mais in French, thinks he has sufficiently explained it. But it seems to me to intimate several relations the mind gives to the several propositions or parts of them, which it joins by this monosyllable. First, "but to say no more:" here it intimates the step of the mind in the course it was going, before it came quite to the end of it. Secondly, "I saw but two plants:" here it shows, that the mind limits the sense to what is expressed, with a negation of all other. Thirdly, "you pray; but it is not that God would bring you to the true religion."

5Ibid., III, vii, 4, pp. 382 f.
Fourthly, "but that he would confirm you in your own." The first of these buts intimates a supposition in the mind of something otherwise than it should be; the latter shows, that the mind makes a direct opposition between that, and what goes before it.

Fifthly, "all animals have sense; but a dog is an animal;" here it signifies little more but that the latter proposition is joined to the former, as the minor or a syllogism. 6

Beyond these words Locke does not go. He concludes,

To these, I doubt not, might be added a great many other significations of this particle, if it were my business to examine it in its full latitude, and consider it in all the places it is to be found: which if one should do, I doubt whether in all those manners it is made use of, it would deserve the title of discretion which grammarians give to it. But I intend not here a full explication of this sort of signs. The instances I have given in this one, may give occasion to reflect on their use and force in language, and lead us into the contemplation of several actions of our minds in discoursing, which it has found a way to intimate to others by these particles; some whereof constantly, and others in certain constructions, have the sense of a whole sentence contained in them. [Italics ours]7

The criticism Locke makes is of some importance. If one consults the dictionary for the meanings of particles he will find that the definition of them consists simply in translating them, in substituting for one particle another of similar part of speech or a phrase which translates but does not define. When one considers that particles of multiple meanings are not limited to Greek and Hebrew, and that a single word may be interpreted in scores of ways, some of which are widely divergent and not infrequently opposite, he must

6Ibid., III, vii, 5, p. 383.
7Ibid., III, vii, 6, p. 383.
conclude that a very wide area is being entrusted to the regulative power of usage alone. Semantics will not be a complete study of the signs used in language so long as this area is neglected.
CHAPTER IX

IMPERFECTIONS AND ABUSES OF LANGUAGE

"The very nature of words," says Locke, "makes it almost unavoidable for many of them to be doubtful and uncertain in their significations."¹ Yet their degree of perfection is variable, depending upon the type of words used, and the use to which they are put. Words have two uses: to record our thoughts and to communicate our thoughts. (Actually, words have other uses not mentioned by Locke, as observation will disclose, and as such a book as Hayakawa’s Language in Action notes.)²

When we use language to record our own thoughts, any use we make of it is legitimate, if it is helpful rather than confusing. "Since sounds are voluntary and indifferent signs of any ideas, a man may use what words he pleases to signify his own ideas to himself."³ Locke advises using the same word for the same idea in this use.

Language used for communication also has a double use. The first of these is for civil use. The other is for

¹John Locke, An Essay concerning Human Understanding, III, ix, 1, p. 385.
²See Chapter 5. ³Locke, op. cit., III, ix, 2, pp. 385 ff.
philosophical use. Civil use is the use of language in the everyday affairs of life for common conversation and commerce. It is very largely the type of language which Ogden and Richards said could be dispensed with, used in "the business of the paper-boy or the butcher, for instance, where all that needs to be referred to can equally well be pointed at." 4 Language works so adequately that people who rarely or never have need for a philosophical use of words would probably not realize that language is inadequate. For example, in common conversation people "usually conceive well enough the substances meant by the word 'gold' or 'apple,' to distinguish the one from the other." 5

By the philosophical use of words, on the other hand, Locke means

such an use of them as may serve to convey the precise notions of things, and to express, in general propositions, certain and undoubted truths which the mind may rest upon and be satisfied with, in its search after true knowledge. 6

This use of words requires far more exactness, and errors arise whenever "any word does not excite in the hearer the same idea which it stands for in the mind of the speaker." 7 That is the language problem in a nutshell. The word is a neutral entity between the thoughts of two persons. It

4 See note 18, Chapter 1.
5 Locke, op. cit., III, ix, 15, p. 392.
6 Ibid., III, ix, 3, p. 386.
7 Ibid., III, ix, 4, p. 386.
either binds them in a mutual understanding of an idea, or it separates their minds and sends them down two different roads where they can never meet.

Locke lists four factors which contribute to imperfection of words. Since the imposition of sound upon idea is arbitrary and must be learned and remembered, anything that makes it hard to learn and remember the meaning of a word contributes to confusion. It is hardest to learn and remember words when

First, The ideas they stand for are very complex, and made up of a great number of ideas put together.
Secondly, Where the ideas they stand for have no certain connexion in nature; and so no settled standard any where in nature existing to rectify and adjust them by.
Thirdly, Where the signification of the word is referred to a standard, which standard is not easy to be known.
Fourthly, Where the signification of the word, and the real essence of the thing, are not exactly the same.\[3\]

Besides these difficulties, there are such others as imperfections of organs and faculties which make it impossible for persons to comprehend simple ideas of a certain type.

The two types of words most liable to misuse are the mixed modes and the substances. The mixed modes are subject to the first two types of error and the substances to the last two types. In addition, the mixed modes are learned in a way that contributes to their poor use. For the sounds of

\[3\] Ibid., III, ix, 5, p. 386.
the mixed modes are generally learned first and the meanings later. Often the meanings are subject to considerable debate.

Many a man, who was pretty well satisfied of the meaning of a text of scripture, or clause in the code, at first reading, has, by consulting commentators, quite lost the sense of it, and by those elucidations given rise or increase to his doubts, and drawn obscurity upon the place.\(^9\)

Particularly are the ancient writers often necessarily obscure because of changes of meanings of the mixed modes. For although common use, the rule of propriety, regulates the meanings of words in common conversation, it can not serve such a function in philosophical use of words, there being scarce any name, of any very complex idea (to say nothing of others), which in common use has not a great latitude, and which, keeping within the bounds of propriety, may not be made the sign of far different ideas. Besides the rule and measure of propriety itself being nowhere established, it is often matter of dispute whether this or that way of using a word be propriety of speech or no.\(^10\)

The words least subject to misunderstanding are the names of the simple ideas and after them of the simple modes.

All of Locke's work sprang to some extent from his realization of the need of tolerance. The country had passed through a series of wars of religion and intolerance, during the course of which Locke's father had been impoverished. Through the intolerance of the times Locke himself was forced to flee into exile until the "Glorious Revolution," and in

\(^9\)Ibid., III, ix, 9, p. 389.
\(^10\)Ibid., III, ix, 8, p. 388.
1689 he published his *Epistola de Tolerantia*. It is only against this background that we can understand Locke's point of view in writing the *Essay*.

The imperfection of language he finds a strong reason for tolerance. If we have trouble even in understanding our own language, by what common sense do we become so dogmatic about what was said in others? Examination of the Greek writings discloses that there was tremendous variation among the various writers in their use of the language, so much so, that we will find "in almost every one of them, a distinct language, though the same words."\(^{11}\)

But when to this natural difficulty in every country there shall be added different countries and remote ages, wherein the speakers and writers had very different notions, tempers, customs, ornaments and figures of speech, &c., every one of which influenced the signification of their words then, though to us now they are lost and unknown, it would become us to be charitable one to another in our interpretations or misunderstanding of those ancient writings. [Italics ours]\(^{12}\)

Especially does he point out the Old and New Testaments as being "very fallible in the understanding of it,"\(^{13}\) infallibly true though it is.

Nor is it to be wondered that the will of God, when clothed in words, should be liable to that doubt and uncertainty which unavoidably attends that sort of conveyance, when even His Son, whilst clothed in flesh, was subject to all the frailties and inconveniences of human nature, sin excepted. [Italics ours]\(^{14}\)

---

\(^{12}\) *Ibid*.  
\(^{14}\) *Ibid*.  
\(^{15}\) *Ibid*.
Besides its unavoidable imperfections as a means of communication language is subjected to avoidable misuse. Just as imperfections of language demand tolerance of us, so the abuses of it demand a more careful use of language. Locke lists seven types of abuse of language.

In the first place, words are used without any, or without clear ideas. Particularly have the "several sects of philosophy and religion" introduced words without any meaning.

For their authors or promoters, either affecting something singular, and out of the way of common apprehensions, or to support some strange opinions, or cover some weakness of their hypothesis, seldom fail to coin new words, and such as, when they come to be examined, may justly be called "insignificant terms." Such words are simply "blabs" and will be found to have either no meaning or inconsistent meanings and become empty sounds with little or no signification "amongst those who think it enough to have them often in their mouths, as the distinguishing characters of their church or school, without much troubling their heads to examine what are the precise ideas they stand for." The schoolmen and metaphysicians are called the "great mint-masters of these kind of terms."

An even worse fault is using words associated with very important meanings without giving them a distinct meaning.

\[15\text{Ibid.}, \text{III}, \text{x}, \text{2}, \text{p. 397.} \quad 16\text{Ibid.} \]

\[17\text{Ibid.}, \text{III}, \text{x}, \text{2}, \text{p. 398.}\]
The reason for this is that we learn this type of word before its meaning and the majority of us never go to the trouble of fixing the meaning.

This insignificance in their words, when they come to reason concerning either their tenets or interest, manifestly fills their discourse with abundance of empty, unintelligible noise and jargon, especially in moral matters where the words for the most part, standing for arbitrary and numerous collections of ideas, not regularly and permanently united in nature, their bare sounds are often only thought on, or at least very obscure and uncertain notions annexed to them. [Italics ours]^{18}

Men who use language thus may have little but ignorance in their minds, but it is impossible to convince them of a mistake, "it being all one to go about to draw those men out of their mistakes who have no settled notions, as to dispossess a vagrant of his habitation, who has no settled abode."^{19}

The second abuse of language is unsteady application of words, that is, using the same word for various meanings.

If men should do so in their reckonings, I wonder who would have to do with them! One who would speak thus in the affairs and business of the world, and call eight sometimes seven, and sometimes nine, as best served his advantage, would presently have clapped upon him one of the two names men constantly are disgusted with.^{20}

Yet Locke finds it a greater dishonesty to distort truth than to cheat with money.

^{18}Ibid., III, x, 4, p. 398.  ^{19}Ibid.  ^{20}Ibid., III, x, 5, p. 399.
In the third place, words are given "an affected obscurity, by either applying old words to new and unusual significations, or introducing new and ambiguous terms without defining either; or else putting them so together as may confound their ordinary meaning." It is particularly Aristotelian philosophy which has offended in this way, according to Locke. Logic and the liberal sciences, and especially disputation have tended more "to perplex the signification of words . . . than to discover the knowledge and truth of things."22

This, though a very useless skill . . . hath yet passed hitherto under the laudable and esteemed names of "subtilty" and "acuteness;" and has had the applause of the Schools, and encouragement of one part of the learned men of the world.23

There is nothing harder to do than to dispute such misuses of words and the doctrines they hide, for there is no such way to gain admittance, or give defense to strange and absurd doctrines, as to guard them round about with legions of obscure, doubtful, and undefined words; which yet make these retreats more like the dens of robbers, or holes of foxes, than the fortresses of fair warriors; which if it be hard to get them out of, it is not for the strength that is in them, but the briers and thorns, and the obscurity of the thickets they are beset with. For untruth being unacceptable to the mind of man, there is no other defence left for absurdity but obscurity.24

---

21 Ibid., III, x, 6, p. 399.
22 Ibid., III, x, 6, p. 400.
23 Ibid., III, x, 8, p. 400.
24 Ibid., III, x, 9, p. 401.
The trouble with such abuse of words is that it ends in the destruction of the instruments of knowledge and communication. Meanings of words being arbitrary impositions in the beginning, it is as easy to destroy as to invent. Therefore the philosophers in question had the advantage to destroy the instruments and means of discourse, conversation, instruction, and society; whilst, with great art and subtilty, they did no more but perplex and confound the signification of words, and thereby render language less useful than the real defects of it had made it; a gift which the illiterate had not attained to.25

Locke follows these remarks with one of the most bitter denunciations of the practitioners of this false learning that has ever been made:

Nor hath this mischief stopped in logical niceties or curious empty speculations; it hath invaded the great concerns of human life and society, obscured and perplexed the material truths of law and divinity, brought confusion, disorder, and uncertainty into the affairs of mankind, and, if not destroyed, yet in great measure rendered useless, those two great rules, religion and justice. What have the greatest part of the comments and disputes upon the laws of God and man served for, but to make the meaning more doubtful, and perplex the sense? What has been the effect of those multiplied curious distinctions and acute niceties, but obscurity and uncertainty, leaving the words more unintelligible, and the reader more at a loss: How else comes it to pass that princes, speaking or writing to their servants, in their ordinary commands, are easily understood? speaking to their people, in their laws, are not so? . . .

I leave it to be considered, whether it would not be well for mankind, whose concernment it is to know things as they are and to do what they ought, and not to spend their lives in talking about them or tossing words to and fro; whether it would not be well, I say,

25Ibid., III, x, 10, p. 401.
that the use of words were made plain and direct; and that language, which was given us for the improvement of knowledge and bond of society, should not be employed to darken truth, and unsettle people's rights; to raise mist and render unintelligible both morality and religion.26

The fourth abuse of words is taking them for things. Here again the schools of philosophy are attacked. Those who have been raised Aristotelians actually believe, he says, that "'substantial forms,' 'vegetative souls,' 'abhorrence of a vacuum,' 'intentional species,' &c., are something real."27 Similarly, "The Platonists have their 'soul of the world,' and the Epicureans their 'endeavour towards motion' in their 'atoms when at rest.'"28 In a word, "There is scarce any sect in philosophy has not a distinct set of terms that others understand not." All these are called "gibberish."29

These errors are perpetuated, for it would be a hard matter to persuade any one that the words which his father or schoolmaster, the parson of the parish, or such a reverend doctor used, signified nothing that really existed in nature; which perhaps is none of the least causes that men are so hardly drawn to quit their mistakes, even where they have no other interest but truth.30

The fifth misuse of words is setting them for what they cannot signify, that is, giving them a false referent. The

---

26 Ibid., III, x, 12-13, pp. 401-02.
27 Ibid., III, x, 14, p. 402.
28 Ibid., III, x, 14, p. 403. 29 Ibid.
30 Ibid., III, x, 16, p. 404.
most frequent example of this error is using them for the real essences of substances. There are two false suppositions beneath this fault. The first is that nature is regular and arranged in fixed species, the other that the species of nature are in conformity with our systems of classification. We today are apt to think that our knowledge of the elements puts us past this error, but not many years ago we were even more sure of our knowledge of them, yet the discovery of radio-activity proved us mistaken. Similarly, the orderliness of the universe of Newton proves not to have been the real universe. And as for biology, a knowledge of essences in Locke's sense would make us able to explain all the details of evolution and give us the complete power over it which we have not. Although we are not quite as unable to speak in terms of the real constitution of things as the men of Locke's day, yet it is still dangerous for us to assume that we can in any way apply our words to "things as they really are."

The sixth misuse of words arises from the supposition that words have a certain and evident signification. This might be called a naive use of words. "Men think it strange if . . . one sometimes asks the meaning of their terms."

The result of this attitude is disputing.

31Ibid., III, x, 22, p. 407.
For, though it be generally believed that there is
great diversity of opinions in the volumes and variety
of controversies the world is distracted with, yet the
most I can find that the contending learned men of dif-
ferent parties do in their arguings one with another,
is, that they speak different languages. For I am apt
to imagine, that when any of them, quitting terms, think
upon things, and know what they think, they think all
the same; though perhaps what they would have, be dif-
frent.  

The seventh abuse of language is the use of figurative
speech. Locke was peculiarly unsympathetic to poetry, writ-
ing in Some Thoughts concerning Education,

if a child have a poetical vein, it is to me the strangest
thing in the world that the father should desire or suf-
fer it to be cherished or improved. Methinks the parents
should labour to have it stifled and suppressed as much
as may be; and I know not what reason a father can have
to wish his son a poet . . . . For it is very seldom seen
that any one discovers mines of gold or silver in Par-
nassus. It is a pleasant air, but a barren soil . . . .
Poetry and gaming which usually go together are alike
in this too, that they seldom bring any advantage but
to those who have nothing else to live on.  

With all of his thought on the matter of semantics Locke
does not seem to realize the extent of the imagery in indi-
vidual words and phrases of the passage quoted above. Writ-
ing between 1670 and 1690, Locke may be free from some of the
blame we should be apt otherwise to give him for his view-
point, for poetry may have meant to Locke the metaphysical
conceits, the language and life of Euphues, and merely an
extravagant type of amusement of an aristocracy which was

\[^{32}\text{Ibid., III, x, 22, p. 408.}\]
\[^{33}\text{John Locke, Some Thoughts concerning Education, in-
cluded in Locke, Selections, Charles Scribner's Sons, p. 9.}\]
already showing the decadence which aroused Carlyle's ire. For, in spite of Carlyle's classification of Locke as a "logic-chopper," both men illustrate a solid middle-class respect for men who do good building and farming and contempt for those who are "logic-choppers." It is as fair to class Locke among the "logic-choppers" as it was for Aristophanes to class Socrates among the Sophists.

But yet, if we would speak of things as they are, we must allow that all the art of rhetoric, besides order and clearness, all the artificial and figurative application of words eloquence hath invented, are for nothing else but to insinuate wrong ideas, move the passions, and thereby mislead the judgement; and so indeed are perfect cheats . . . .34

In general, language is abused or deficient when it fails to carry out its purposes. These are threefold: to "make known one man's thoughts or ideas to another," "to do it with as much ease and quickness as possible," and "thereby to convey the knowledge of things."35 Five reasons are given for failure in the three aims. They are (1) using words without distinct meanings, (2) having unnamed ideas, (3) using words with variable meaning, (4) using words in unusual senses, and (5) having fantastic ideas. Our ideas of substances are liable to all these types of error. Our ideas of the mixed modes and relations are subject to the first four types.36

Having discussed the "natural and improved imperfections of language," Locke addresses himself in the last chapter of the third book of the Essay to the problem of remedies for them. These are not easy, and "the market and exchange must be left to their own ways of talking, and gossipings not be robbed of their ancient privilege." But all those who pretend seriously to search after and maintain truth ought to try for clear use of language. For, although through improper use of language one does not "corrupt the fountains of knowledge which are in things themselves, yet he does ... break or stop the pipes, whereby it is distributed to the public use and advantage of mankind" with mistakes, obstinacy, wrangling, ostentation, and noise.

Locke proposes five remedies. The first is to use no word without an idea. The second is to make sure that the ideas are precise; that is, clear and distinct for simple ideas, determinate for complex ideas, conformable to things for substances. The third is to avoid using words in unusual meanings. Since words are not a "man's private possessions, but the common measure of commerce and communication, it is not for any one, at pleasure, to change the stamp they

---

37 Ibid., III, xi, 3, p. 412.
38 Ibid., III, xi, 5, p. 413.
40 Ibid., III, xi, 9-10, pp. 415-16.
are current in." If it should sometimes prove necessary to do so, he should give notice of it.\textsuperscript{41}

The fourth way is by making one's meaning clear. This can be done in three ways. In simple ideas it can be done by the use of synonyms or by showing directly what one means. In mixed modes this can be done by definition. And in substances this can be done by showing what one means or by defining, the first being preferred where it is applicable. In order to make the meanings of things clearer Locke recommends the drawing up of an illustrated dictionary, but sadly remarks that such a dictionary "will require too much time, cost, and pains to be hoped for in this age," or, as he says elsewhere, "ever to be hoped for." One wonders how influential such a remark may have been upon Samuel Johnson.\textsuperscript{42}

The fifth way is by constancy in the signification of words:

If men will not be at the pains to declare the meaning of their words, and definitions of their terms are not to be had; yet this is the least can be expected, that, in all discourses . . . one should use the same word constantly in the same sense.

If this were done, by and by, Locke prophecies, "many of the philosophers' . . . as well as poets' works might be contained in a nut-shell."\textsuperscript{43}

\textsuperscript{41}Ibid., III, xi, 11, p. 416.
\textsuperscript{42}Ibid., III, xi, 12-25, pp. 416-423.
\textsuperscript{43}Ibid., III, xi, 26, p. 423.
CHAPTER X

CONCLUSION

One must ask the question how much the modern semanti-
cists have added to the work of Locke, or how much they have
invalidated. Such a question may be answered only by refer-
ence to the individual modern. Indeed, it is by no means
clear at present exactly what constitutes semantics. The
subject has been approached primarily by philosophers, mathe-
maticians, philologists, literary critics, translators, and
psychologists, but as it was suggested by Susanne Langer,¹
the idea of meaning is one which is being applied in the
solution of problems of many types. Even if one confines
oneself to a relatively limited scope for semantics, one
must note the dissimilar schools of Ogden and Richards and
of Korzybski, the followers of the latter being far more
numerous and vociferous, but not being by virtue of that fact
necessarily more correct than those of the former.

Surely, a step that must be taken is an improvement in
terminology within the area of semantics itself, differenti-
tiating more clearly between meaning applied to signs in
general and meaning applied to language, between what might

¹Susanne Langer, Philosophy in a New Key, p. 16.
be called semiotics and semantics. Presumably the term General Semantics was intended to identify such a distinction, but terminology is, nevertheless, not clear. Even after establishment of such a terminology the fields would show the relationship of universal and particular and would continue to demonstrate interplay between them.

It is because of this interrelationship between the larger and more confined field that Locke may be said to influence the entire field of meaning. However, our attempt at present is to show that semantics as a study primarily of language is closely related to Locke's thought about words. Here the parallels between Locke and the moderns are many.

The most important thought of modern semantics, according to Walpole, is the formulation of the triangle of reference. "This Triangle of Reference," he says,

is the one detail in this book which needs to be remembered outright, by force if necessary. If the reader lost his book he could build up again for himself the subject matter of semantics, on the basis of the Triangle of Reference.²

Yet Locke's study of the scheme illustrated by the triangle goes far beyond the limited study made by the semanticist (acting, that is, in the capacity of a semanticist, in which capacity he does not usually challenge the validity of the relationships on two sides of the triangle). Locke's study examines the validity of the relationships of all three sides

²Hugh Walpole, Semantics, p. 82.
of the triangle in some detail. In this respect, then, Locke's work is complete; that of Ogden and Richards or of Walpole is merely a rule of thumb.

Locke anticipates modern semantics in his emphasis upon definition. In this his method differs considerably from that of the modern schools, as we have pointed out, largely because of differences between Locke's psychology and modern psychology. In this comparison Locke stands as pioneer in a field in which more has been learned and in which some of his assumptions have been invalidated. The results of the comparison will depend largely upon our point of view, whether we are trying to regain for Locke credit which is rightly his, or whether we are trying to demonstrate that some progress has been made since his day. Locke spoke before the tyranny of the modern dictionary in a day when, perhaps, too much of the meaning of words was being learned through contexts and too little through definition. A technic of definition was necessary and had to be insisted upon, and in this insistence Locke was among the most influential. Today, on the contrary, dictionary definition has become the rule. There is need to combat the tyranny of small dictionaries by pointing out that they give only a clue to the meaning of words, and that a much more complete definition comes from observing connotations as well as denotations in a variety of contexts. The methods, therefore, of definition have
been expanded considerably since Locke's writings, but the insistence upon definition is certainly in large part a contribution of Locke.

In the matter of poetry, the attitude of Ogden and Richards is surely more intelligent than that of Locke. As we have noted, Locke conceived of poetry as being "a barren soil," unproductive of wealth. But Ogden and Richards are very much interested in poetry and in the meaning of beauty. Their work springs from the supposition that the basis for creating true beauty in poetry is an understanding of the multiple uses of words. They display interest in metaphor as a process through which language grows. Locke, on the contrary, although he recognizes that process as having occurred, nevertheless bluntly dismisses figurative speech as one of the abuses of language which "render language less useful than the real defects of it had made it." It is beyond the scope of our venture to judge between these opposed estimates of the value of poetry, but our sympathy is with the defenders of poetry.

Ogden and Richards set forth six Canons controlling "the System of Symbols known as Prose."³ It will be of interest to determine to what extent they represent concepts not known in Locke's day, for in these Canons lie the practical principles of their system. The First Canon states that "One

Symbol stands for one and only one Referent." As a corollary it is observed that "When a symbol seems to stand for two or more referents we must regard it as two or more symbols, which are to be differentiated."4 Locke's system is a far sternier discipline than may be stated in any neat rule such as this, since it quickly becomes clear that referents are not for Locke the simple, stable objects that are premised by the canon. Experience, as Locke is fond of pointing out, comes in particulars, and communication would be impossible unless we found common ground by abstraction from particular experience. Under such conditions, if taken literally, the First Canon of Ogden and Richards would ultimately reduce us to the necessity of naming every sheep, every bird, every leaf of grass, a process which Locke points out is not only impossible but useless.

The Second Canon states that "Symbols which can be substituted one for another symbolize the same reference." If we distinguish between symbols within one language and symbols in more than one language, we face the fact which Locke points out that only when symbolization is confused do two or more symbols within one language signify the same referent.5 The discussion by Ogden and Richards makes it clear that their

4Tbid., p. 91.

meaning is similar. Normally, two synonymous terms will differ slightly in connotation. Since, however, the referent includes connotation no two terms would usually have exactly the same referent and could in strict practice neither be considered synonymous nor be substituted one for another. Similarly, the meanings of chien and dog will be found to be less alike than we should normally assume. This also Locke points out. 6

The Third Canon states that "the referent of a contracted symbol is the referent of that symbol expanded." 7 This principle recognizes that symbolization may occur at different levels of interpretation. This thought, much exploited by Korzybski and his followers, permeates Locke's thought. It is to be found in his theory of abstraction which recognizes that abstraction is accomplished by omission of particular details. It is to be found also in his thought about substances, gold, for example, where he recognized that when we speak of gold we speak not of gold as it really is, but in terms of a few ideas which we have assembled and attached to the term. In fact, it is this very fact that all of our thought about substances, about ideas in the minds of others, especially the fictions, and about the names of the mixed modes is necessarily done in terms of contracted symbols

6Ibid., III, v, 8, p. 351.

7Ogden and Richards, op. cit., p. 93.
which it is not in our power to expand that makes Locke insist upon frequent definition of our words.

"A symbol refers," according to the Fourth Canon, "to what it is actually used to refer to; not necessarily to what it ought in good usage, or is intended by an interpreter, or is intended by the user to refer to."\(^8\) Locke's thought upon this matter is that a person is free to use any word for any idea so long as he is not using language for communication, but only for the benefit of his own thinking. Such a word as "thing-a-ma-jig" may thus serve any use we wish to give it. Nor do we give up that freedom when we use the language for communication. Locke merely questions the wisdom of using words in unusual senses, since language is not a private instrument but the common possession of the whole society. That the signification of words is an arbitrary creation is basic to his whole theory of language, and to this assumption Canon Four is simply one of many corollaries.

The Fifth Canon states that "no complete symbol may contain constituent symbols which claim the same 'place.'"\(^9\) This law is certainly a corollary of Locke's whole system of building complex ideas out of simple. But the "constituent symbols" or simple ideas are, as we have seen, the very symbols which Locke considers least likely to be confused.

\(^8\)Ibid., p. 103.  
\(^9\)Ibid., p. 105.
The last Canon, the Sixth, states, "All possible referents together form an order, such that every referent has one place only in that order."\textsuperscript{10} It might be difficult to find an exact parallel to this canon in Locke's work, but he could hardly have been ignorant of the three Aristotelian laws of which they are a summary. Thus we see that the Canons of Symbolism as given by Ogden and Richards are a simple, practical, although incomplete summary of principles familiar to Locke and earlier writers.

As we pass to the consideration of some of the main tenets of Korzybski we find him emphasizing the fact that man is a time-binding animal.\textsuperscript{11} Apparently this thought has struck Korzybski with the force of a religious inspiration, and perhaps he has seen a beauty in the concept beyond what the rest of us find. Yet man is, in fact, not a time-binding animal any more than a bird or any other animal. In each a certain evolution has presumably occurred which illustrates the process of time-binding. Yet man out of civilization would show no peculiar time-binding ability, unless we are to readmit the hypothesis of Lamarck concerning transmission of acquired characteristics. Korzybski's theory surely is not that man is a time-binding animal, but rather that in language he has found a tool which makes time-binding possible.

\textsuperscript{10}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 106.

\textsuperscript{11}Alfred Korzybski, \textit{Science and Sanity}, p. 39.
Except in so far as he may have found individual religious inspiration in such a concept it is certainly not a twentieth century concept. It is questionable whether any anthropologist would care to guess the earliest date of the occurrence of this idea. We may question whether time-binding is a part of semantics.

Korzybski's refusal to accept the Aristotelian law of identity\(^\text{12}\) amounts to nothing more than the acceptance of Locke's tenet that language as we know it is shot through-out with the process of abstraction, without the further realization that we are the gainers through that process even though it subjects us to the frustration of realizing that it is impossible for us to speak of "things as they are."

It would be untrue and not in the least helpful to contend that no worth-while additions have been made since Locke's time. Nevertheless, such additions are not as frequent as is commonly supposed, and such additions as have actually been made prove too often either to have little to do with Semantics or to be minor in importance.

Though not specifically a work on semantics, Langer's *Philosophy in a New Key* serves as an excellent orientation to the problem of meaning and perhaps fulfills the proper function of a general semantics. In such a work Locke would have

\(^{12}\text{Ibid.}, \text{pp. 92-94.}\)
found new ideas derived from many sources. That work seems to presage a general development of thought about symbols of which Locke's work will be only a special case.

Though his literary style is not brilliant, we may, perhaps, predict that his simple exposition of problems and the wealth of observation recorded, as well as his unswerving devotion to the quest for what is true, will cause Locke's work to receive more adequate recognition from the semanticians of the future than it has been awarded by his recent disciples.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


