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Martin Lenz's *Lockes Sprachkonzeption* [Locke's Conception of Language] is a *Habilitationsschrift* that aims to give a comprehensive account of Locke's philosophy of language that aims at both historical and textual accuracy while at the same time finding a place for Locke's views on the meaning of language in contemporary philosophy of language and semantics that deserves to be taken seriously. In this respect, Lenz's long book on Locke's philosophy of language continues on the groundbreaking path set by Michael Ayers' (1993) monumental work *Locke* devoted to Locke's epistemology and metaphysics.

The book is divided into five sections. The first section is devoted to Locke's views on the relationship between words and ideas. Lenz argues that for Locke words and ideas are "interdependent" in such a way that words play a "stabilising role" in our thinking. For example, the formation of certain complex is made possible only when the ideas are "annexed" to a name (p. 51). Section II is a wide ranging historical discussion, but two theses stand out. First, Lenz argues that Locke's conception of the interdependence of words and ideas rests on late scholastic developments that build on Augustine's idea that in addition to concepts, and the understanding contains images of spoken words in terms of which we can think. Second, Lenz rejects Locke's claim in the *Essay* that it was only after he started drafting the *Essay* that he concluded he needed an extended discussion of the signification of language (Locke 1975, III.9.21, p. 488). Instead, the turn to language, according to Lenz, happened before he began writing Draft A in 1671.

Section III is devoted to Locke's views on ideas and judgment. Lenz argues that Locke's ideas have "double life" (p. 215). On the one hand, ideas are the materials of knowledge that serve a natural history of our understanding that also includes a causal account of human ideas. Locke's doctrine of the *tabula rasa,* furnished

by sensation and reflection with simple ideas that are received passively as causal effects of powers of material objects belongs to this natural history of the understanding. On the other hand, Locke's ideas are part of an introspective account of the human understanding where they are constituents of our conscious thoughts (p. 227). In this role, they are constituents of occurrent thoughts (*Denkepisoden*), specifically they are intentional contents for various acts of thinking. Accordingly, ideas have two kinds of contents: introspectible intentional contents and causal content. Lenz maintains that ideas as items in a natural history of the human understanding and ideas as items in a, so to speak, phenomenology of the human understanding intersect at the point where occurrent thoughts are analyzed into their parts, for example, simple ideas, and somehow built into this analysis is a presupposition that these simplest parts have an origin. The natural history of ideas, then, is supposed to satisfy this presupposition (p. 240-3). However, this natural history includes more than an account of the causal origins of simple ideas, but an explanation of the origins of the human understanding's complex ideas. Lenz's key idea is that not only does the formation of stable complex ideas require names, but that these names must be part of a public natural language, and hence subject to public use and standards. Without this "external consolidation" Lenz argues that Locke believes, a thinker could not have a complex idea of a particular substance (p. 275-6).

Lenz develops this "social externalist" reading of Locke's theory of language in Sections IV and V. In Section IV Lenz argues that what over 50 years ago Norman Kretzmann (1961) introduced as "The Main Thesis of Locke's Semantic theory" really isn't "the" main thesis. The thesis that "*Words in their primary and immediate Signification, stand for nothing, but the* Ideas *in the Mind of him that uses them*" (Locke 1975, III.2.2, p. 405) has to be, in Locke's own mind, supplemented by another thesis, namely, a thesis concerning the common acceptation of names (p. 379). Locke's thesis about immediate signification does not yield a standard of correctness for the speaker, but words in circulation in public discourse with a commonly accepted standard of the proper signification of names serve as a standard of correctness for a speaker. Lenz cites the following passage as Locke's statement of this point:

> For words, especially of Languages already framed, being no Man's private possession, but the common measure of Commerce and Communication, 'tis not for any one, at pleasure, to change the Stamp they are current in; nor alter the Ideas they are affixed to. . . (Locke 1975, III.3.11, p. 514).

Lenz takes this to mean that it is not the private signification imposed by the speaker that is decisive [*ausschlaggebend*] for the establishment of a semantic standard, but the word's public use. He expresses surprise that the "social interdependence of words and ideas that Locke so explicitly emphasizes is hardly noticed in the secondary literature" (pp. 386-7). Even those that have noticed and highlighted Locke's views on how we "rectify" our ideas, Lenz maintains, failed to notice that Locke's rectification is essentially a social process (pp. 507-8; also p. 16).

This second, social, thesis is articulated and defended in Section V, entitled "Locke's Socially Externalist Conception of Language". The essential partner to Locke's thesis that a word immediately signifies only the ideas that the person has who uses the word is the thesis that how a person uses a word cannot run counter to or be inconsistent [*zuwiderlaufen*] with common usage or acceptation (pp. 439 and 457). Accordingly, Lenz writes, "the meanings of words are regulated by social environment, specifically, by the linguistic community" (p. 439).

Lenz argues for this, first, on the basis of several texts from Locke's *Essay*. For instance, he again cites the passage quoted above about words "being no Man's private possession" (pp. 487-8), and two long passages from Locke's chapter on the "*Names of Substances*" in Book III. In the first passage, which is Locke's famous discussion of the language of Adam and his children, Lenz highlights the claim:

> If therefore [Adam's children] would use these Words [*"Kinneah*" and *"Niouph*"], as Names of *Species* already establish'd and agreed on, they were obliged to conform the *Ideas*, in their Minds, signified by these Names, to the *Ideas*, that they stood for in other Men's Minds, as to their patterns and *Archetypes*; (Locke 1975, III.6.45, p. 467).

According to Lenz, the key here is Locke's claim that Adam's children, in a context where there is already an established language with these words, have an *obligation* to adjust and rectify their ideas so that they conform to the ideas of other people using that language. The second passage is where Locke writes that although human beings "may make what complex *Ideas* they please, and give what Names to them they will," if when they speak of substances to other people and want to be understood, and not just be "intelligible to [themselves]",

> they must, in some degree, conform their *Ideas* to the Things they would speak of . . .

and

> some way answer[. . .] the common appearances and agreement of Substances, as they really exist. (Locke 1975, III.6.28, p. 456).

Lenz takes "common appearances" in this passage to refer to appearances or ideas that are common to the speakers and, moreover, that Locke is making a normative claim that if people want to be understood, they are obligated to conform their ideas to things (p. 507). Lenz also likes another passage from Locke's chapter on "*General Terms*" where Locke writes that being a particular object that belongs to a certain kind or species and, accordingly, has the essence of that kind or species, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, "conform[ing] to the *Idea* to which the name [of that kind or species] is annexed, being that which gives a right to that name . . . must needs be the same thing" (Locke 1975, III.3.12, p. 414). Lenz highlights Locke's phrase "gives a right to that name" because it suggests that an individual object that satisfies the general idea a name signifies satisfies a relevant normative standard. Lenz writes that "objects that conform to an idea of a kind or species have a right to the name" of this kind or species (p. 450)

Lenz sees these passages as supporting what could be characterized as his 'master argument' for Locke's social externalism, and why, according to Lenz, the thesis about common acceptation enjoys "priority" over Locke's thesis concerning the immediate signification of words (p. 459). The primary purpose of language, according to Locke (according to Lenz), is to facilitate communication, and for Lenz this means that communicative purposes

trump the epistemic functions language has. So a speaker is bound to the communicative purposes of language, and a language can satisfy this purpose only if there is a common acceptation of names, which means that there is a common idea or appearance annexed to a name, and a speaker, being bound by language's communicative purpose, is bound to regulate her ideas according to this common acceptation (pp. 355, 449-50, and 460). Lenz then argues that common acceptation -- public convention -- is required because, among other things, nature, by itself, cannot set a standard because it is a source of too many competing standards, and only linguistic conventions can settle this (p. 474).

Readers familiar with contemporary and current problems and topics in the philosophy of language -- privacy and the rule-following considerations, the role or place of truth, intentions, conventions and causes in linguistic meaning, the relation between meaning and reference, the meaning and reference of natural kind terms, the normativity of linguistic meaning -- will notice the relevance of these to Lenz's 'master argument' and Lenz draws on these debates. I have focused on Lenz's interpretation of Locke on language, which is Lenz's primary task (p. 9)

I would like to examine a bit more closely Lenz's intriguing and novel historical theses is that Locke's turn to language occurred prior to Draft A, written summer of 1671, sometime before he started working on Draft A and after his *Questions Concerning the Law of Nature* (1664). Lenz's argument is that in Draft A Locke had already turned to language, and consequently Locke's own claim that he turned to language while writing the *Essay* is not to be taken at face value. Certainly Lenz (pp. 160 and 208) is right that Draft A has much more to say about language than has been previously assumed, and that Locke himself in Draft A writes that "in the discourse I have here made concerning humane Intellect I could not avoid saying a great deale concerning words because soe apt & usuall to be mistaken for things" (Locke 1990, Draft A. §4, 13). But I think Lenz's conclusion unwarranted that this passage conflicts with Locke's statement in the *Essay* that initially he had "proposed" to himself to first write about the instruments and materials of knowledge and then proceed to a discussion of "what Knowledge we have

by them," but "upon nearer approach" he found "that there is so close a connexion between *Ideas* and Words; and our abstract *Ideas* , and general Words, have so constant a relation one to another, it is impossible to speak clearly and distinctly of our Knowledge . . . without considering, first, the Nature, Use, and Signification of Language" (Locke 1975, II.33.19: p. 401).

Locke interpretation does best when he is read literally and carefully, and this is a case in point. Locke's claim in Draft A is that he needs to discuss language because a many words, mainly words for complex ideas of substance and relation, "are not defined" and it is not "agreed on between the speaker & the hearer for which that word shall stand" (Draft A). So this is the central issue in Draft A: words for complex ideas are ill defined and he will focus on how this comes about and how to avoid this. But the passage from the *Essay* adds a new topic: the "so *close* a connection between *Ideas* and Words," the "so *constant* a relation" between abstract ideas and general words. This is not just about the signification of words, but about an especially close and constant tie between words and ideas, especially in the case of abstract ideas and general words, that motivated Locke to add Book III on language between Book II on Ideas and Book IV on knowledge. Locke describes this close relation very clearly in Book IV: "*the way to improve our Knowledge*, is not, I am sure, blindly, and with an implicit Faith, to receive and swallow Principles, but it is, I think, *to* get and *fix in our Minds clear, distinct, and complete* Ideas, as far as they are to be had, *and annex to them proper and constant Names*" (Locke 1975, IV.12.6, p. 642). The new topic is the annexation of names, which is not to be confused with the signification of names, and this topic plays a central role in his discussion of common nouns or "general terms" in chapter 3 of Book III. General words signify abstract ideas, but abstract ideas hang together only if they have "names annexed to them" (Locke 1975, III.3.9, p. 412; III.3.13, p. 415).

While arguably, Locke is raising issues in Draft A that developed into the annexation of names, this theory is not in Draft A. Locke discusses complex ideas, how they vary from person to person, how some are unstable in the human understanding, and how all this causes instability in the signification of our words and useless

arguments. His discussion of general ideas emphasizes their instability, and the consequent instability in the signification of general words (Locke 1990, Draft A, §2, pp. 8-10). But nowhere does he discuss that the very construction of these complex ideas involves that the simple ideas collected in the complex idea are annexed to a name. The closest he comes to this doctrine in Draft A is when he writes that for moral words, e.g. "gratitude" it is "far easier to learne the sound Gratitude then to collect & precisely determin the certain number of simple Ideas that goe to make up the notion of gratitude" (Locke 1990, Draft A, §4, p. 13). Of course, this is not a new doctrine but part of the critique of language we already find in Bacon or Hobbes that words are "the mony of fooles". What develops after Draft A is the idea that words are required to make complex ideas. This is what distinguishes Draft A from the *Essay*, and what he is referring to when he writes that words and ideas have a "so close a connexion" and "so constant a relation" that he needed to add a separate book devoted to language.

Lenz has written a comprehensive and inspired account of Locke's philosophy of language, supplying important historical background information from late medieval and early modern scholasticism as well as contemporary analytic philosophy of language. Weaving Locke's *Essay* into this extensive and rich historical and philosophical context in this way challenges received and recent readings of Locke's *Essay*. However, in the end, the weave, however large, is not tight and close enough when it comes to the interpretation of Locke's to be convincing, let alone attain the magisterial standard set by Ayers' study of the *Essay*.

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