LOCKE ON PARTICLES:
A REPLY TO BERMAN AND WILLIAMSON

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As Berman and Williamson are concerned only to rebut the arguments advanced in my article, I shall confine myself to commenting briefly on the efficacy of that alleged rebuttal.

1. I agree that we should not simply assume that, because there was a traditional distinction between particles and other words, Locke was conforming to it. But neither should we simply assume that, because Locke aimed at breaking with tradition, he actually repudiated each and every element of that tradition. Whether in a particular case a traditional doctrine is relevant depends upon the extent to which it is of assistance in reaching an intelligible and plausible interpretation of problematic passages. Now my point is that in ascribing to Locke the doctrine I have highlighted we save him from advocating a position that is both systematically rather unlikely and historically exceptional, presenting him instead, and in full accordance with the pertinent texts, as upholding a position that was commonly accepted in his days and is systematically much more satisfactory. It is not to be expected that in adhering to the traditional view Locke would explicitly state that he was doing so, or cite his sources in a footnote; for him, the separate treatment of particles apparently sufficed to mark the distinction he had in mind. On the other hand, if he deviated from the common view along the lines indicated by Berman, a clear statement to that effect and a more detailed justification of that unusual doctrine would have been called for.

The observation that it is noteworthy that I characterize the tradition as one in which categorematic words signify *things*, whereas it is not in dispute that, for Locke, such words primarily signify *ideas*, is pointless. Virtually all parties agreed that categorematic signs are normally related to both concepts or ideas and things: they either signify things in subordination to concepts or signify both in a certain hierarchical order (See, for instance, E.J. Ashworth, " 'Do Words Signify Ideas or Things?' The Scholastic sources of Locke's Theory of Language", *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 19 (1981), 299-326).

2. Let us leave aside the question whether Berkeley really was so exceptional in interpreting Locke as having held that particles do not stand for ideas. More important is the fact that he not only ascribed that view to Locke in his notebook comments but retained it in a somewhat modified form and for his own purposes in his published writings. He repeatedly points out that it is impossible to explain the meaning of words that stand for the mind and its activities by an appeal to corresponding ideas. He does not make it clear whether his introduction of the concept of notion is meant to account also for the way in which words by means of which mental activities are actually performed discharge their semantic function. But it can hardly be doubted that, given his repudiation of ideas in the case of words for activities of the mind as they are made the object of reflection, he would have repudiated them *a fortiori* for the corresponding particles.

3. The remark that in spite of their grammatical difference the noun (substantive) and the adjective name the same idea cannot be considered as having regard to a comparable case. The fact that Locke did not think of adjectives as always differing in signification from the nouns to which they correspond cannot be a proof by analogy that he did not adhere to a difference in signification between such nominal expressions on the one hand and particles on the other. The distinction between categorematic and syncategorematic signs is of a much more fundamental type than the distinction between two species of categorematic sign. What is stated about expressions within the class of categorematic signs is simply not relevant to what should be held about the altogether different relationship between categorematic signs and syncategorematic signs or particles.

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