Abstract: This paper concerns a problem facing Locke’s philosophy of language (namely, the signification of the copula) as well as one facing his philosophy of mind (namely, mere conception or apprehension of a proposition). These worries are distinct, though a certain class of solutions to the former—“proto-Fregean” solutions—turn on reading Locke as having avoided the latter problem. This paper focuses on the worry that such interpretations can only help solve the problem of the copula by trading away one of Locke’s key insights about the workings of language, and argues for a solution which is able to preserve that insight.

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