



Frege, August Bebel and the Return of Alsace-Lorraine: The dating of the distinction between *Sinn* and *Bedeutung*¹

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A detailed chronology is offered for the writing of Frege's central philosophical essays from the early 1890s. Particular attention is given to (the distinction between) *Sinn* and *Bedeutung*. Suggestions are made as to the origin of the examples concerning the Morning Star/Evening Star and August Bebel's views on the return of Alsace-Lorraine. Likely sources are offered for Frege's use of the terms *Bestimmungsweise*, *Art des Gegebenseins* and *Sinn und Bedeutung*.

1. Setting the stage

For five years, from 1886 to 1890, Frege published nothing, even though part of his *Nachlass* clearly belongs here.² In *Die Grundlagen der Arithmetik* (GLA) (Frege 1884) he did not give a completely formal reduction of arithmetic to logic. Instead, and possibly at the instigation of Carl Stumpf, he offered a logicist reduction in *informal* language.³ Frege was conscious of the fact that GLA had only made it plausible that arithmetic was a branch of pure logic and that a complete demonstration would demand carrying out the reduction in question within the formal *Begriffsschrift*, thereby ensuring the *Lückenlosigkeit* of his derivations.⁴ In 1882, Frege had already indicated in correspondence that the formal execution of the logicist reduction was close to completion. Eventually this task turned out to be no routine matter and markedly more difficult than was expected at first.⁵ The 1879 *Begriffsschrift* proved insufficient

1 Emended text of (part of) a talk given at conferences in Leyden and Helsinki, April and June 1998, and at a Utrecht Frege colloquium, April 1999, as well as at LOGICA '99, Chateau Liblice, Czech Republic, June 1999. I am indebted to Gottfried Gabriel and Peter Simons for the suggestion, made at the Frege celebrations at Jena in November 1998, that the material be prepared for publication. I am also indebted to Dr Kai F. Wehmeier, Emmy Noether Fellow of the DFG, formerly of the Institut für Mathematische Logik und Grundlagenforschung at Münster University, for help with the so called *Scholz-lists*, and for a valuable suggestion concerning *das Paar*, as well as for checking the German quotes.

The work reported herein involved frequent consultations of many volumes of ancient German periodicals and records of the *Reichstag*; I would not have found my way without the efficient and courteous help that was unflinchingly offered by the Leyden University Library staff.

For reference to Frege's writings I use standard abbreviations given in the references.

2 I here count 'Über formale Theorien der Arithmetik' to 1885. Among the *Nachlass* pieces the attempted reviews of books by Cantor and Biermann, as well as the first draft of *Über Begriff und Gegenstand* spring to mind.

3 See the WB letters to, and from, Carl Stumpf, 29 August 1882 (listed under Anton Marty) and 9 September 1882.

4 GLA, §§90–91, and Gg, pp. VII–IX and 1. In general I will use italics for German expressions; I make an exception for *Begriffsschrift*, which I take to be a formula-language. *Begriffsschrift*, on the other hand, is a book.

5 See the letters referred to in fn. 3, the *preface* to FB, and Gg, p. VIII. It would be of great interest to know the contents of this 1882 manuscript, and whether it is the same as that mentioned in the preface to the Gg.

for the work at hand: it had to be revised considerably, in particular through the addition of *Wertverläufe*.

The three major philosophical essays that Frege published in the early 1890s provide an attempt at a philosophical underpinning of the revised *Begriffsschrift* (Bs).⁶ Of these essays, ‘Über Sinn und Bedeutung’ (SB) has acquired a special prominence, owing in large measure to the importance attached to the sense-reference distinction, and variants thereof, within *current* philosophy of language. When celebrating the centenary of its appearance, Peter Simons lamented that:

[t]he approximate date at which Frege had arrived at and clarified for himself the distinction between sense and reference probably cannot now be determined with any precision.⁷

The purpose of this article note is to supply such precision. This might be of interest for two sorts of reasons. First, in view of its current prominence, it is, perhaps, of some intrinsic interest to know precisely when Frege reached the distinction. More importantly though, detailed information concerning the date and order in which Frege’s doctrines were reached provides valuable evidence for the ever ongoing debate of whether Frege was primarily a mathematician or a philosopher, whether a philosopher of mathematics or of language. I confine myself to noting the relevance of my chronological points for these issues; their precise evaluation has to wait for another occasion.

2. Upper bound on the date

The essay SB was published in the first 1892 issue of the *Zeitschrift für Philosophie und philosophische Kritik*.

The first appearance of the distinction in print, however, is in *Funktion und Begriff* (Frege 1891) (FB), which was delivered as a lecture on 9 January 1891, and subsequently published in pamphlet form during that year. Frege’s correspondence with Wilhelm Koebner in Breslau, the publisher of GLA, which takes place between 23 January and 18 February 1891, has, we may take it, the FB booklet as its subject. The fourth instalment in this correspondence, to wit Frege’s draft-letter, mentions ‘das Manuscript’. This undated draft letter (which was probably never sent, in view of the fact that FB eventually appeared, not with Koebner in Breslau, but with Hermann Pohle in Jena) was penned on the reverse of Koebner’s letter of 18 February 1891.⁸ Furthermore, in his letter of 30 May 1891, Walter Brix offers his belated thanks to Frege for sending him a copy of FB: Frege’s letter had had to be forwarded, and it had reached Brix only after some delay.⁹ Accordingly, Frege must have had printed copies of FB by, say, the end of April or early May 1891.

6 The three essays in question are, of course, FB, SB and BG. FB is cited already in the Preface to Gg and all three are referred to in the first few pages of the main text.

7 Simons 1992.

8 That FB is the work under discussion seems certain in view of the price (RM 1:25 or 1:50) that Frege suggests in his draft-letter. As advertised in Gg, Vol. II, Pohle sold the work at RM 1:20. (I owe this information to Kienzler 1997.) In view of his limited financial means, this lower price might have been instrumental in Frege’s choice of publisher. Whatever the reason, Frege was clearly satisfied with the house of Pohle, since, during the next dozen years, all his later book(let)s, to wit, Gg I, *Über die Zahlen des Herrn Schubert*, and Gg II, appeared under that imprint.

9 WB p. 13.

Thus from the two correspondences, we can conclude that the printed version of FB existed in manuscript by March 1891.

The distinction is firmly in place, also for unsaturated expressions, in the famous letter to Husserl of 24 May 1891.¹⁰

On 16 June 1890, Richard Falckenberg, the Editor of *Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Philosophische Kritik*, writes to Frege concerning his review of Lange's book on the law of inertia. The letter is a reply to a previous letter from Frege that is no longer available. There was a backlog problem:

Ihre Anzeige von *Lange's* Bewegungsbegriff habe ich richtig erhalten. Nur die unerwartete Ausdehnung der Besprechung ist Schuld daran, daß sie noch nicht erschienen.

The letter then offers instructions for the publication of the review and continues:

Eine Besprechung von Schröders Algebra der Logik wäre mir selbstverständlich willkommen, wie alles aus Ihrer Feder. Bis jetzt habe ich jedoch noch kein Rezensionsexemplar erhalten. Wenn ein solches eintrifft, können Sie es sofort bekommen.

Die Logische Abhandlung über Sinn und Bedeutung nehme ich, wenn sie nicht gar zu umfangreich ausfällt, gern und mit Freuden an. Doch glaube ich, daß der Verleger ein Honorar dafür nicht zahlen würde. Nach einer mir aufgestellten Berechnung sind die Druck- u. Herstellungskosten bei der gegen früher sehr verbesserten Ausstattung so hoch, daß er kaum den ersten Teil der Abhandlung honorieren kann. Ich kann dem Manne nicht zumuthen, daß er zusetzt. Wollen Sie mir bitte mitteilen, ob Sie unter diesen Umständen geneigt sind, mir den Artikel zu überlassen.¹¹

These passages allow some conclusions concerning the dating of the distinction and the writing of the essay: (a) the distinction is manifestly in place in the spring, May of 1890; (b) does the essay exist at this point? Falckenberg is happy to accept 'the logical treatise on *Sinn* and *Bedeutung* if it does not turn out to be too long'. Accordingly, the entire SB text was not completed at the time of Frege's letter. Falckenberg's turn of phrase seems to indicate that he has seen at least part of the projected article. Towards the end he raises the delicate matter of possible remuneration and notes that the production costs are now so high that the publisher can hardly pay (even) for the 'ersten Teil der Abhandlung' without incurring a loss.

As I read his letter Falckenberg is replying to *two* previous letters from Frege: one submitting the review of Lange and a later one inquiring whether Falckenberg did receive the review. The second letter also submitted the (first half of the) logical treatise on *Sinn* and *Bedeutung* and raised the issue of payment for the review of Lange and for SB, should the latter be published, if and when completed. Note here also that Falckenberg's having seen (part of) a manuscript for SB would serve to make 'the logical treatise on *Sinn* and *Bedeutung*' the natural mode of

¹⁰ In his letter of reply Husserl thanks Frege for a number of off-prints; FB, however, is not mentioned among them. Nevertheless, Husserl *did* possess a copy of the FB booklet, for information concerning which see KS, pp. 431–434.

¹¹ WB, p. 48.

expression, whereas in the absence of a text, a logical treatise would have been more natural.

What is the first part of the article? The published SB covers pages 25–50, with a natural break at page 36. Until then Frege has been largely concerned to formulate and make plausible ‘die Vermutung, daß der Wahrheitswert eines Satzes dessen Bedeutung ist’.¹² This conjecture he will now put to further tests, which are mainly concerned with the behaviour under substitution of certain sub-sentential parts. My suggestion, then, is that Falckenberg would have based his (undoubtedly correct) editorial decision to publish the entire essay, ‘happily and with pleasure’, on condition that it does not turn out too long (no doubt because of the high production costs) on the first magnificent 12 pages, where the distinction is spelled out and made plausible(?) also for complete sentences. I conclude that in May 1890, the distinction has been drawn, but the text of the essay is only half-completed.

3. Lower bound on the date

In the earlier works, starting with Bs, the distinction between *Bedeutung* and *Sinn*, obviously cannot be found. Instead, we find an analogous distinction, between *Inhalt* and *Bestimmungsweise*. This earlier terminology is still firmly entrenched in GLA. The early pages of Otto Biermann’s Weierstrassian treatment of complex analysis aroused Frege’s polemical talent and a draft review can be found in the *Nachlass*.¹³ On its final page Frege presents an example very much in the style of those that he uses in order to introduce and motivate the distinction between *Sinn* and *Bedeutung*. Undoubtedly that distinction would have been used here, had it been available at the time of the Biermann (draft)-review; instead the discussion is couched in terms of *Inhalte*. The Biermann-review, however, is not dated. The earliest possible year, of course, is 1887, the year in which Biermann’s book was published. The mature Frege generally took some time for his reviews, though. Cohen (1883) is reviewed in 1885. Lange (1886) is reviewed in 1891. Kerry (1887) is reviewed in 1892. Various works of Cantor, which originally appeared in 1886–1888, and in book-form in 1890, are reviewed in 1892. Husserl (1891) is reviewed in 1894. Schröder (1890) is reviewed in 1895. This suggests a minimum period of two years, between publication and the (published) review, which would make the Biermann-fragment stem from 1889, early 1890 being the latest possible date at which he could still have cast an example in terms of *Inhalte*, in view of the upper bound established above.

The so called *Scholz-lists* contain brief descriptions of the contents of the entire *Nachlass*. This invaluable source was printed already in Veraart (1976), but, strangely enough, it has been left largely unexplored. Of particular relevance for my theme is the entry VII: ‘*Mathematische Einfälle*’, which refers to 12 notebooks comprising 1730 pages. It was Frege’s express wish that nothing should be printed from these. Notebook VI was begun in 1879 and appears to have been devoted to (the development of) the *Begriffsschrift*. These are the entries pertaining to the contents of notebook VI:

Zur *Begriffsschrift*: ...VI 165, 166: ‘Kurze Darstellung der Begriffsschrift auf ihrem jetzigen (10.XI. 1889) Standpunkt’.

¹² As has been stressed by Ignacio Angelelli (1982) in his thought-provoking work.

¹³ Biermann 1887. Frege’s draft-review is printed as ‘Über den Begriff der Zahl’, part 1, NS, pp. 81–95.

Wertverlauf, Kennzeichnung. Funktion. Begriff. Beziehung.
 Ausdruck. Gleichheit. Definieren. Das Paar. Anzahl.
 Gleichzahligkeit. *Gleichheit*: . . . VI 165: Frage der Ersetzung:
 Gegenstand und seine 'seelischen Bilder'. Ungenauigkeit der
 Sprache. 166: Ersetzung. Indirekte Rede. . . .
Definition: . . . VI 166: Definition von Gegenständen. . . .

Zahl: . . . VI 162 (Anzahl, gleichzahlig, Nachfolger), 165 (Anzahl,
 Nachfolger) . . .

Begriff: . . . VI 162: Umfang, Kennzeichnung, einfacher Begriff.
 Umfänge die unter einen Begriff fallen. Funktion. 165 (Ersetzung,
 Gedanke. Paar), 166: Wertverlauf einer Funktion—Umfang eines
 Begriffs. Begriff und Funktion. Umfang, scharfe Begrenzung,
 Unterordnung . . .

Funktion: . . . VI 162, 165 (Wert, Ersetzung, Wertverlauf) 166:
 Erweiterung des Begriffs Funktion. Wahrheitswerte. Wertverlauf.
 Funktion zweiter Stufe.

Gedanke: VI 165 (seelisches Bild eines beurteilbaren Inhalts ist
 Gedanke, Klasse der wahren Gedanken, Klasse der falschen
 Gedanken.¹⁴

Here the first item, which indicates that by November 1889 crucial changes had been effected in the formal *Begriffsschrift* with respect to the 1879 version, is of central importance. *Werthverlauf* and *Kennzeichnung* are genuine novelties. The other notions (with the exception of *das Paar*) can be found also in the old version, but are now reinterpreted. In Bs *Gleichheit* was *Inhaltsgleichheit* and held between expressions. Similarly, a function was an *Ausdruck*.

Why was Frege compelled to make a clear statement of the needs of a revised *Begriffsschrift* at that very time? A possible reason for this lies in his teaching: in the summer semester of 1889 Frege conducted a seminar—with two participants only—on Dedekind's then recent (1888) booklet *Was sind und was sollen die Zahlen?*¹⁵ As Richard Heck has remarked Gg, Vol. I, reworks formally a lot of themes from Dedekind.¹⁶ Especially Frege's beautiful Theorem 263 is important in this context. Frege, when attempting to formalize Dedekind's theory of chains, using the 1879 techniques of the *Begriffsschrift*, will speedily have discovered that his earlier pious hope, in GLA (section 68, footnote*), to avoid the use of *Begriffsumfänge* turns out to be unrealistic.¹⁷

¹⁴ Veraart 1976, pp. 100–101.

¹⁵ Kreiser 1983, pp. 340 and 345.

¹⁶ Heck 1995, §II, pp. 299–303, especially fn. 15, p.301 and Heck 1997, §II. I am indebted to Kai Wehmeier for drawing my attention to the latter.

¹⁷ I cannot agree with Heck 1995, p. 284, fn. 44, though, that it seems unlikely that Frege knew of Dedekind's proof when he proved theorem 263. On the contrary, given that Frege conducted a seminar on Dedekind 1888 in the summer of 1889, and, in *November* of that year, felt the need to summarize the necessary changes in the *Begriffsschrift*, changes without which one would be hard put to effect Dedekind's early proofs (not to mention the later), it does seem a virtual certainty that Frege *did* know of Dedekind's proof when composing his own.

A comparison with the Gg, Vol. I, list of contents is revealing:

I. Darlegung der Begriffsschrift.

1. *Die Urzeichen.*

- §1. Einleitendes über Funktion, Begriff, Beziehung
- §2. Die Funktion ist ungesättigt
- §3. Wahrheitswerthe, Bedeutung und Sinn, Gedanke, Gegenstand
- §4. Werthverlauf einer Funktion, Begriff, Umfang eines Begriffes
- §5. Funktionen mit zwei Argumenten¹⁸

Both *Gleichheit* and *Kennzeichnung* are dealt with slightly later in *Grundgesetze der Arithmetik* (Frege 1893/1903) (Gg), at, respectively, sections 7 and 11. Only *Ausdruck* and *Paar* from the November 1889 description are missing in the early parts of Gg.¹⁹ On the other hand, the Gg section 2 notions of truth-value, *Bedeutung*, and *Sinn*, are missing from the *Scholz-list*. However, such points that Frege wanted to make concerning ‘Ausdruck. Gleichheit. Definieren.’ from the *Scholz-list*, certainly would occur, *mutatis mutandis*, in the *Einleitung*, page 4 (concerning the use of quotation marks) and sections 26, 27 and 33, as well as in section 2. The omnipresence of the *Sinn/Bedeutung* distinction makes possible a different organization of the material. Finally, in Gg *das Paar* is used to treat of the infinite, and of inductive definitions, culminating in Theorem 263. Richard Heck noted that the Gg section 144 definition of ordered pairs works well only given that the truth-values are objects. The reduction of *Doppelwertverläufe* to iterated single *Wertverläufe* presupposes a *unified* domain when applied to the relations. Thus, after the introduction of the truth-values as *objects*, pairs are readily dealt with using the notion of a *Doppelwertverlauf*, and a separate, possible primitive notion of pair is made redundant. On the *Scholz-list* from late 1889, we find both ‘course of value’ and ‘the pair’, but not ‘truth-value’. On the other hand, if the universe of *objects* contains the truth-values, the Gg reduction works well and there is no need for a separate notion of ordered pair. Thus, I conclude, Frege did not have the doctrine of (objectual) truth-values on ‘10 November 1889’. Accordingly he did not have the doctrine of *Sinn* and *Bedeutung*, either: the splitting up of the *beurteilbare Inhalt* in *Wahrheitswert* and *Gedanke* is the central feature of the novel theory.

This reading is given further support from another entry in the *Scholz-lists*:

Funktion: ...VI 162, 165 (Wert, Ersetzung, Wertverlauf) 166: Erweiterung des Begriffs Funktion. Wahrheitswerte. Wertverlauf. Funktion zweiter Stufe.

The description of the current—November 1889—version of the Begriffsschrift runs from page 165 to page 166, but does *not* contain *Wahrheitswerte*. Later on that very same page 166 we do find the telling entry:

Widening the notion of function. Truth-values.

With that addition the revision of the Begriffsschrift is complete; in November 1889 it was not, but in a subsequent entry, on the very same page, it is. Thus, the

¹⁸ Gg, I, p. XXVII.

¹⁹ In Gg, *Gleichzähligkeit* and *Anzahl* are dealt with, respectively, at §39 and §42.

final step in the revision must have been taken during the six months between December 1889 and May 1890.

4. Confirmation: The German army estimates of 1890

Frege as a rule favoured neutral examples using ‘eternal’ sentences such as ‘ $2 + 3 = 5$ ’ and ‘ice is less dense than water’. He was not altogether averse, though, to using examples that were politically tinted. These were often strongly nationalistic in tone, and not without an anti-French bias: ‘After Sleswick-Holstein was separated from Denmark, Prussia and Austria quarrelled’ and ‘Caesar conquered Gaul’ spring to mind. His examples are usually concerned with historical figures (Caesar, Napoleon, Wellington, Columbus) or prominent scientists (Kepler). Living persons, to the best of my knowledge, are only used twice.²⁰ The first is Frege’s old teacher Leo Sachse, who occurs in early *Nachlass* pieces only.²¹

In *Über Sinn und Bedeutung*, on the other hand, we find the famous:

Bebel wähnt, daß durch die Rückgabe Elsaß-Lothringens Frankreichs Rachegefühle beschwichtigt werden können.²²

This Bebel-example occupies a unique position in Frege’s writings: it refers to a prominent living politician and to events that must be very near to the time of writing. It concerns the specific activity of the (then) most famous German social democrat. Of course, it is possible that Frege just invented this example, perhaps out of a dislike of Bebel, or of social democrats, or of France, or even of all three, but it does not seem likely that he did so: the tone and setting of the example are such that one would expect it to refer to an actual occurrence. On the basis of this observation, the date of the writing of SB can be determined somewhat closer.

The Falckenberg letter, of 16 June 1890, with its good news that the essay on ‘the logical distinction between *Sinn* and *Bedeutung*’ is welcome in his *Zeitschrift*, must have reached Frege one or two days later. *One week* after that, on 25 June 1890, the German *Reichstag* debated the army estimates. In this debate August Bebel, the leader of the Social Democrats, delivered a major speech.²³ *En passant* he touched upon to a theme dear to his heart, namely that by its annexation of Alsace-Lorraine, Germany had driven revolutionary France into the arms of reactionary Russia, thereby exposing itself to the dangers of a two-front war.²⁴ The rest of the lengthy speech dealt with the rigours of army training, the lack of concern on behalf of the officers for their men and the preponderance of suicide

20 I would not be in the least surprised, however, if Dr Gustav Lauben, Herbert Garner, Rudolf Lings, and Leo Peter, all of whom are well-known from *Ged*, were to necessitate a revision at this point.

21 In the ‘Dialog mit Pünjer’ and the *Kernsätze*, respectively. See NS p. 67 and p. 190. Concerning Leo Sachse and his relation to Frege, see Heblack 1997, Gabriel 1997, and Kreiser 1997. Hovens 1997 is devoted to a meticulous dating of the *Kernsätze*.

22 SB, p. 47. English translation: Bebel fancies that the return of Alsace-Lorraine would appease France’s desire for revenge.

23 Covering ten double-column pages of the *Stenographische Berichte über der Verhandlungen des Reichstags*. VIII. Legislaturperiode. I. Session. 1890/91, Norddeutsche Buchdruckerei und Verlags-Anstalt, Berlin, 1890, pp. 565–574. Extracts from this and other relevant speeches are reproduced in the Appendix.

24 Frege’s choice of examples in SB—‘nachdem Schleswig-Holstein von Dänemark losgerissen war, entzweiten sich Preussen und Österreich’ and the Bebel example—indicates an interest in the strategic options open to Germany. This interest Frege retained until the very end of his life; see the entry for 5. 5. 1924 in his *Politisches Tagebuch* [1994].

in the army. The speech, as could be expected, met with approval from the Left and derision from the Right.

In his reply, the War Minister, Julius von Verdy du Vernois, took offence at Bebel's remarks on army suicide and also challenged (what he took to be) Bebel's view that 'the return of Alsace-Lorraine (die Rückgabe von Elsaß-Lothringen) would save on armaments'. Furthermore, the Reichstag deputy Baron von Manteuffel entered the debate, and continued to harp on the Alsace-Lorraine question.

At the time of adjournment, an irritated Bebel was compelled to make a personal statement, in order to correct the (false) impression that had been created by the War Minister: Bebel took the Chamber as witness that in his speech he had not with one sentence or word alluded to, or suggested, the return of Alsace-Lorraine to France.

The situation is the following: *one week* after Frege had received the editorial *nihil obstat* for an essay on the logical distinction between *Sinn* and *Bedeutung*, we find August Bebel at the centre of a parliamentary row concerning the 'Rückgabe von Elsaß-Lothringen': the person fits, the topic fits, and the time fits. This event, undoubtedly, was the source of Frege's example.

5. Digression: The chronology of Frege's philosophical essays

The Begriffsschrift was in good logical order, and adequate to its task of executing the logicist reduction, Frege held, by November 1889, and during the following spring and summer he obtained the idea of truth-values as objects and the concomitant distinction between *Sinn* and *Bedeutung*. Most of the technicalities of FB were in place during 1889 and the remaining ones as well as the supporting philosophical ideas in the first half of 1890. The text must have been in an almost finished state when Frege gave his lecture on 9 January 1891.

In FB (p. 14, fn. 6) Frege refers to 'meinen nächstens erscheinenden Aufsatz über Sinn und Bedeutung in der Zeitschrift für Philosophie und phil. Kritik'. So at this stage, New Year 1890–1891, the article is accepted for publication in Falckenberg's journal. Therefore, Frege must have known that the condition on its length had been met. In other words, by then he had the manuscript of SB.

There are two versions of BG: the one published in 1892 and the *Auseinandersetzung mit Kerry* in the *Nachlass*.²⁵

- 1) In both versions reference is made to 'meiner Schrift "Funktion und Begriff" (Jena 1891)'. FB appears in the spring of 1891, so the summer of 1891 is the earliest possible date for the essay BG.
- 2) Also SB is mentioned. In the published version we read:

Man vgl. meinen Aufsatz über Sinn und Bedeutung, der demnächst in der Zeitschrift für Philosophie und phil. Kritik erscheinen wird.²⁶

In the preliminary version, on the other hand, we read:

Als ich meine Grundlagen schrieb, hatte ich den Unterschied zwischen Sinn und Bedeutung noch nicht gemacht*) und daher unter dem Ausdrucke

²⁵ NS, pp. 96–127.

²⁶ BG, p. 195, fn. 5.

“beurtheilbarer Inhalt” noch das zusammengefasst, was ich jetzt mit den Worten “Gedanke” und “Wahrheitswert” unterscheidend bezeichne, . . .

*Vergl. meinen Aufsatz über Sinn und Bedeutung in der Zeitschrift für Philosophie und phil. Kritik.²⁷

In both cases the essay SB is referred to, but in the published, *later*, piece we have ‘demnächst . . . erscheinen’. This constitutes a confirmation for dating BG to late 1891: Frege obtained a manuscript version of SB during the autumn of 1890, and knew that it was not unduly long. Thus, in the Kerry version he can refer to his article in the *Zeitschrift* because of Falckenberg’s promise. There was a backlog problem and in the first draft Frege only knows that, but not when, SB will be published. In BG itself, however, he knows when it will appear, namely ‘demnächst’.

- 3) In both draft and published versions of BG, reference is made to Schröder’s *Algebra der Logik* (1890), in a way that indicates study of the work.²⁸ At the time of the letter to Falckenberg (? May 1890), Frege did not yet have the book in question.
- 4) Walter Brix sent Frege his papers concerning the ‘mathematische Zahlbegriff’ on 15 November 1890.²⁹ In his undated draft-reply Frege mentions relevant views of Helmholtz, Kronecker and Dedekind, as well as of Kerry, and indicates that possibly he must write against them.³⁰ (Both SB and FB are, by now, virtually finished and it is time for Frege to think of other tasks). The Helmholtz–Kronecker views were summarily discussed in the then almost completed FB.³¹ Dedekind had to wait his turn, but Kerry was to be dealt with at length, in both draft and published versions of BG.

I conclude that BG was the last of the three essays to be written, in the summer and/or autumn of 1891.

6. Odds and ends: Some further pieces of evidence relevant to the dating of Frege’s works

In Bs the same *Inhalt* could be given using several *Bestimmungsweisen*. In SB Frege abandoned this terminology in favour of *Bedeutung* and *Sinn*, respectively. The *Bestimmungsweise* metaphor is retained, however, under the guise of an *Art des Gegebenseins*. A *Bestimmungsweise* that does not determine anything is still a *Bestimmungsweise*, but something that does not exist cannot have an *Art des Gegebenseins*, since there is nothing there to be given. Why did Frege change his earlier, happy, terminology? Can we find any possible exterior stimuli that might have effected the change?

In SB Frege famously wrote:

Es liegt nun nahe, mit einem Zeichen (Namen, Wortverbindung, Schriftzeichen) außer dem Bezeichneten, was die Bedeutung des Zeichens heißen möge, noch

27 NS, p. 108.

28 FB, p. 194, fn. 2, and NS, p. 100, fn. *.

29 WB, pp. 10–11.

30 WB, p. 12.

31 FB, p. 3, fn. 3. In the light of the letter to Brix, this might be a very late addition to the FB text.

das verbunden zu denken, was ich den Sinn des Zeichens nennen möchte, worin *die Art des Gegebenseins* enthalten ist.³²

Even though the editors clearly have no aversion to including philosophers' technical terms, (*Art des*) *Gegebenseins* does not carry a lemma in the Grimms' huge *Wörterbuch* from 1880.

Cantor, on the other hand, wrote:

Eine Mannigfaltigkeit (ein Inbegriff, eine Menge) von Elementen, die irgendwelcher Begriffssphäre angehören, nenne ich wohldefiniert, wenn auf Grund ihrer Definition und infolge des logischen Prinzips vom ausgeschlossen Dritten es als intern bestimmt angesehen werden muß, sowohl ob irgendein derselben Begriffssphäre angehöriges Objekt zu der gedachten Mannigfaltigkeit als Element gehört oder nicht, wie auch ob zwei zur Menge gehörige Objekte, trotz formaler Unterschiede in *der Art des Gegebenseins* einander gleich sind oder nicht.

*Im allgemeinen werden die betreffenden Entscheidungen nicht mit den zu Gebote stehenden Methoden oder Fähigkeiten in Wirklichkeit sicher und genau ausführbar sein; darauf kommt es aber hier durchaus nicht an, sondern allein auf die interne Determination, welche in konkreten Fällen, wo es die Zwecke fordern, durch Vervollkommnung der Hilfsmittel zu einer aktuellen (externen) Determination auszubilden ist.*³³

Did Frege know of this passage? First, there is quite strong evidence that he did: the quote is taken from the third part of a series of *Annalen* articles. In GLA, section 63, Frege cites the separate pamphlet edition Cantor (1883) of the fifth instalment of the same series. Without doubt the *Mathematische Annalen* was a journal with which he kept abreast. It was the foremost mathematics journal of the time in which Frege had attempted (without success) to publish his own examination of Boole's '*rechnende Logik*'.³⁴

Second, in GLA, section 62, we read:

Wenn uns das Zeichen a einen Gegenstand bezeichnen soll, so müssen wir ein Kennzeichen haben, welches überall entscheidet, ob b dasselbe sei wie a, *wenn es auch nicht immer in unserer Macht steht, dies Kennzeichen anzuwenden.* (emphasis added)

The rider concerning the non-effective character of the criterion coincides in content with the second part of the quote from Cantor.

In 1885 Frege had a *contretemps* with Cantor concerning the review of GLA. Frege, on the other hand, reviewed Cantor's pieces from the *Zeitschrift für Philosophie und philosophische Kritik* when they were (re-)published in pamphlet

32 SB, p. 26 (my emphasis).

33 1882. Cited after 1932, p. 150 (my emphasis). I am indebted to Per Martin-Löf for drawing my attention to this Cantor passage. It is quoted in well-known sources. Hao Wang 1974, Ch. VI, 'The concept of set', fn. 12, p. 221 even offers the German text, and, naturally enough, so does the *Frege scholar* H.-G. Steiner in his lemma *Mengenlehre* for the *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*. Strangely enough, its Fregean relevance has, to the best of my knowledge, not been commented upon in the literature.

34 NS, pp. 9–52. See also the letter from Klein, WB, pp. 134–135.

form and in one of these we find the following:

Jede Menge wohlunterschiedener Dinge kann als *ein einheitliches Ding für sich* angesehen werden, in welchem jene Dinge Bestandteile oder konstitutive Elemente sind. Abstrahiert man *sowohl* von der Beschaffenheit der Elemente, *wie auch* von der **Ordnung ihres Gegebenseins**, so erhält man die *Kardinalzahl* oder *Mächtigkeit* der Menge, einen Allgemeinbegriff, in welchem die Elemente, als sogenannte Einsen, gewissermaßen organisch ineinander derartig zu einem einheitlichen Ganzen verwachsen sind, daß keine von den anderen ein bevorzugtes Rangeverhältnis hat.³⁵ (original emphasis italic, additional emphasis bold)

Frege's draft review comments:

Herr Cantor verlangt noch mehr: um die Kardinalzahl zu erhalten, soll man auch von *der Ordnung ihres Gegebenseins* abstrahieren.³⁶ (emphasis added)

Frege also criticises Biermann for his use of 'Einsen', a use that can be found also in Cantor (1887). In his published review of Cantor Frege comments upon 'jene unglücklichen Einsen' (Frege 1967: 164). However, from the draft review of Cantor, it is clear that Frege knew of Biermann's work when he wrote the Cantor review.³⁷ Thus, Biermann first, and then Cantor, seems to be the order in which the reviews were attempted: this, of course, is just what one would expect in view of the dates of publication. Biermann's book was published in 1887, whereas Cantor's book appeared only in 1890, whereas the articles on which it was based appeared 1887–1888.

On the strength of the above Cantor emerges as a likely source for Frege's change of terminology. Frege must have worked on the Cantor material roughly at the same time as when the distinction between *Sinn* and *Bedeutung* coalesces, that is, in early 1890.

Frege wrote:

Jeder dieser beiden Bestimmungsweisen entspricht ein besonderer Name. Die Nothwendigkeit eines Zeichens der Inhaltsgleichheit beruht also auf Folgendem: derselbe Inhalt kann auf verschiedene Weisen völlig bestimmt werden; dass aber in einem besondern Falle durch *zwei Bestimmungsweisen* wirklich *Dasselbe* gegeben werde, ist der Inhalt eines *Urtheils*. Bevor dies erfolgt ist, müssen den beiden Bestimmungsweisen entsprechend zwei verschiedene Namen dem dadurch Bestimmten verliehen werden. Das Urtheil aber bedarf zu seinem Ausdrucke eines Zeichen der Inhaltsgleichheit, welches jene beiden Namen verbindet. Hieraus geht hervor, dass verschiedenen Namen für denselben Inhalt nicht immer bloß eine gleichgiltige Formsache sind, sondern dass sie das Wesen der Sache selbst betreffen, wenn sie mit verschiedenen Bestimmungsweisen zusammenhängen. In diesem Falle ist das Urtheil, welches die Inhaltsgleichheit zum Gegenstande hat, in kantischen Sinne ein synthetisches.³⁸

35 1887, p.83.

36 NS, p.79.

37 NS, p. 78.

38 Bs, §8, pp. 14–15.

Also *Bestimmungsweise* does not have a lemma in Grimm. A possible source, however, is Bernhard Riemann, who used the term prominently and repeatedly—nine times on the three pages of the opening sections I.1 and I.2—in his famous *Habilitation*-lecture *Über die Hypothesen welche der Geometrie zu Grunde liegen*.

Did Frege know of this work? That he did seems to me an absolute certainty. Both *Habilitation*-pieces—the lecture on the foundations of geometry and the dissertation on the representation of functions by means of trigonometric series—were only posthumously published in the proceedings of the Royal Society at Göttingen. The publication of these works in 1868, one year before Frege's arrival, was an event of the first order in the Göttingen mathematical universe and they were very much discussed.³⁹ Frege had a major interest in geometry and his mentor Ernst Abbe was a *Riemannianer*.⁴⁰ Under these circumstances, the burden of proof seems to me to lie on those who claim that he did *not* read this work of Riemann's; *everyone* who studied mathematics at Göttingen in those years would, inevitably, come across Riemann's work, and the more so Frege, whose mentor Abbe was one of Riemann's very few students.

Frege's main interest in mathematics, apart from the foundations of mathematics, was geometry, as witnessed by his choice of topics for lecture courses and *Vorträge*.⁴¹ In 1882 Mortiz Pasch published his *Vorlesungen über neuere Geometrie* with Teubner in Leipzig. We know that Frege came to be aware of the book, for the simple reason that Pasch mentions it in correspondence with Frege, *but only in 1894*. It does not occur on the list of works that Frege lent from the university library at Jena. On the other hand he might have bought his own copy in view of the central importance of its topic for his own teaching interests. The date at which Frege gained knowledge of the work, if at all, is of some interest for our topic in view of the following famous passage:

Es muss in der That, wenn anders die Geometrie wirklich deductiv sein soll, der Process des Folgerns überall unabhängig sein vom *Sinn* der geometrischen Begriffe, wie er unabhängig sein muss von den Figuren; nur die in den benutzten Sätzen, beziehungsweise Definitionen niedergelegten Beziehungen zwischen den geometrischen Begriffen dürfen in Betracht kommen. Während der Deduction ist es zwar statthaft und nützlich, aber keineswegs nöthig, an die **Bedeutung** der auftretenden geometrischen Begriffe zu denken; so dass geradezu, wenn dies nöthig wird, daraus die Lückenhaftigkeit der Deduction und (wenn sich die Lücke nicht durch Abhänderung des Raisonnements beseitigen lässt) die Unzulänglichkeit der als Beweismittel vorausgeschickten Sätze hervorgeht.⁴²

Pasch has here often been read as a Hilbert *avant la lettre*. In my opinion Frege need not take exception to this passage: what is at issue is the logical nature of inference between judgements (or the nature of logical consequence between proposition(al

39 See Nowak 1989, p.40, fn. 18, for detailed information concerning the date of publication for the two Riemann *Nachlass* pieces.

40 His *Mitschrift* of a Riemann lecture on *Funktionentheorie* has recently been published by Erwin Neuenschwander 1996.

41 The extensive material provided by Lothar Kreiser 1983 in the novel appendix to the second edition of *NS* bears ample witness to this point. His 1984 is also a rich mine of information concerning Frege's library loans and early lecture courses.

42 Pasch 1882, p. 98, my **boldface**.

content)s. It is not clear to me whether Pasch would distinguish the two). Pasch simply emphasises the topic-neutrality of logical deduction, but not the topic-neutrality of geometry; the purely logical part of a proof—the *process* of inference or deduction—must not draw upon the meaning of the terms concerned that occur in the axioms. In fact, the passage bears a strong resemblance to GLA sections 3 and 4.

For my present purposes it is interesting to note that Pasch uses both *Sinn* and *Bedeutung* with respect to geometrical concepts. It can be that the later use of *Bedeutung* is merely a stylistic variation of the prior *Sinn*. This is not the only reading, though. Another possible reading seems to contrast the geometrical concepts, with what fails under these concepts, for instance, geometrical figures. One would then apply *Sinn* to the former and *Bedeutung* to the latter. The notion, or concept, of a triangle versus the individual triangles to which the notion can be right applied. This might be reading something into Pasch that cannot really be found there, but if Frege knew the passage prior to 1890, which, given his teaching load in geometry, I suspect he did, there is nothing to prevent him from having read Pasch's *Sinn and Bedeutung* as *Sinn versus Bedeutung* in the manner just outlined.

Frege published his 'wissenschaftliche Berechtigung einer Begriffsschrift' in the *Zeitschrift für Philosophie und philosophische Kritik* already in volume 81 (1882), several years before Falckenberg took over as editor. It, clearly, was another journal with which he kept abreast. Later that same year, it carries a long article on the history of Greek astronomy, which had to be published in two instalments, presumably because of its length.⁴³ The double role of Venus as Morning Star and Evening Star example is touched upon several times and in both parts. Of course, this *might* be pure coincidence. On the other hand, it might well be that we have here the original source of the most famous example of contemporary philosophy of language.⁴⁴

Note

The present paper was submitted in August 1999 and has circulated widely since then. I am indebted to Prof. Jamie Tappenden (Ann Arbor) for pointing out that Clebsch's *Mathematische Annalen* were not yet "the foremost mathematics journal of the time". In 1882 that position was held by *Crelle's Journal*. The *Annalen* were the main outlet for the "Göttingen School", to which Frege had strong links forged by study and his mentor Abbe. Thus, Prof. Tappenden notes, the point with respect to Frege's awareness of the journal still holds good. In forthcoming material Prof. Tappenden deals in great detail with the German mathematical environment in which Frege the mathematician worked). Prof. Tappenden also offers conclusive proof that Frege knew of Riemann's use of *Bestimmungsweise*. In

43 Sartorius 1883.

44 The first instalment is flanked by two articles in which Frege would surely have been interested. It is preceded by Rudolf Eucken's *Fortlage als Religionsphilosoph*. Eucken and Frege were colleagues at Jena and Eucken offered strong support to Frege, see Dathe 1995. It is succeeded by G. Neudecker's *Denknotwendigkeit und Selbstgewissheit in ihrem erkenntnistheoretischen Verhältnis*. Obviously, in view of GLA, §§1–4, this title would have attracted Frege's attention, and the more so *at the very time he was writing GLA*. The second instalment, on the other hand, opens the volume, but is succeeded by Paul Hohlfeld's *Mathematik und Philosophie*. Again, it is obvious that such a title would catch Frege's eye. Thus, if Frege did glance at the *Zeitschrift* it is not at all unlikely that he read the Sartorius article. If I am right, that reading were to have colossal effects on the philosophy of language a hundred years later.

GLA §63, p. 74, footnote *, Frege refers to Kossak's *Programmschrift*, p. 16, where a passage containing six occurrences of *Bestimmungsweise* is quoted *in extenso* from §1 of Riemann's *Habilitation* lecture, as well as to Schröder's *Lehrbuch der Arithmetik und Algebra*, p. 7, footnote *, where Schröder explicitly points out that *Bestimmungsweise* is an "Ausdrucksweise Riemann's" from the *Habilitation* lecture.

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Appendix

*Four speeches in the German Reichstag, 25 June 1890*⁴⁵

Präsident: Das Wort hat der Herr Abgeordnete Bebel.

Abgeordneter **Bebel:** Meine Herren,

[two pages further on]

Nun unterliegt es keinem Zweifel, dass die Situation, in der wir uns gegenwärtig befinden, die Wirkung der Ereignisse von 1870/71 ist, wie ich das bereits bei verschiedenen Gelegenheiten in diesem Hause ausgedrückt habe. Meine Herren, mit den den Ereignissen von 1870/71, mit der Annexion von Elsaß-Lothringen ist es für jeden, der einigermaßen die europäischen Verhältnisse kennt und übersieht, zweifellos geworden, daß von diesem Augenblick ab, mochten die Lebensanschauungen der in Betracht kommenden Völker, ihre Kulturinteressen, ihr Kulturzustand, ihre politischen Beziehungen u.s.w. auch ihrer ganzen Natur nach so verschieden und entgegengesetzt sein, wie sie es sind—dass von diesem Augenblick ab, sage ich, die Interessen Frankreichs und Russlands in gewissem Sinne solidarisch wurden, und daß sie dazu führen müssen, sich gegen Deutschland zu wenden. Als wir im Jahre 1870—mein Freund Liebknecht und ich—und später 1871, wo ich allein im Reichstag war, in ähnlicher Richtung uns aussprachen, haben wir die allgemeine Heiterkeit des Reichstages erweckt. Heute können wir mit Genugthuung konstatieren, dass das, was wir damals ausgesprochen haben, leider voll und ganz sich verwirklicht hat, in einer Weise sich verwirklicht hat, daß es heute wohl keinen Menschen im deutschen Reich mit gesunden Sinnen giebt, der die Richtigkeit unserer damaligen Auffassung betreiten wird.

(Gelächter rechts)

Der Herr Referent Graf Stolberg hat gestern hervorgehoben—und ich stimme ihm bei—dass Deutschland keine weiteren Eroberungen machen wolle, dass Deutschland

⁴⁵ *Stenographische Berichte*, pp. 565–574.

seiner ganzen geographischen Lage nach und nach der Natur seiner inneren und äusseren Beziehungen darauf angewiesen und entschlossen sei, Frieden zu halten. Ich bin überzeugt, dass weder in den höchsten Kreisen noch sonst in irgend einer Schicht der Gesellschaft die Absicht besteht, Deutschland in einen Krieg irgend einer Art zu stürzen. Gleichwohl aber, wir sind hier in den Verhältnissen, die von unserem Willen unabhängig sind. In Frankreich—man mag das verurtheilen, man mag es auch bedauern, die Thatsache ist unumstösslich—in weiten Kreisen Frankreichs und zwar in den massgebenden Schichten denkt man nach wie vor daran, die Erfolge des Krieges von 1870/71 zu beseitigen, die Annexion von Elsass-Lotharingen rückgängig zu machen. Dieser Umstand aber ist es in erster Linie, der Russland bewegte, sich Frankreich zu nähern.

[etc., etc. for another seven pages]

(Bravo! bei den Sozialdemokraten)

Präsident: Das Wort hat der Herr Bevollmächtigte zum Bundesrath, Königlich preußische Staats- und Kriegsminister, General der Infanterie von Verdy du Vernois.

Bevollmächtigter zum Bundesrath für das Königreich Preußen, Staats- und Kriegsminister, General der Infanterie **von Verdy du Vernois:** Meine Herren,

[Half a column further on]

Nun, meine Herren, von den anderen Erörterungen des Herrn Vorredners will ich wenigstens einiges berühren. Es betrifft das die Rückgabe von Elsaß-Lothringen, die uns die Rüstungen ersparen sollte. Elsaß-Lothringen ist das Ausfallsthor für Frankreich nach Deutschland seit ein paar hundert Jahren gewesen und würde es auch wohl in der Zukunft sein, daß die dortigen Bewohner ihr Kontingent zur französischen Armee stellten, die französische Armee vermehrten, die unsrige verringerten, was uns erst recht zwingen würde, die Last einer grösseren Armee durch unser Volk tragen zu lassen.

[and so on for a further two and a half pages]

(Lebhaftes Bravo rechts)

Präsident: Das Wort hat der Herr Abgeordnete Freiherr von Manteuffel.

Abgeordneter Freiherr **von Manteuffel:** Meine Herren,

[one page further]

Ich möchte nur noch auf die Situation seit 1870/71 mit wenigen Worten eingehen, die Herr Bebel auch hier berührt hat, und die ihn veranlasst hat, sogar das auszusprechen, was ich bis jetzt allerdings noch kaum je hier im Reichstage gehört habe, dass es keinen Menschen mit gesunden Menschenverstande gebe, der nicht zugebe, dass die Situation, wie sie durch den Krieg 1870/71 geschaffen sei, lediglich daran Schuld sei, dass wir die Zustände haben die uns die jetztige Lage gebracht haben, die Herr Bebel beklagt. Ich muss zu meinem Bedauern sagen, dass ich mich in diesem Falle zu denjenigen Menschen bekennen muss, die mit gesundem Menschenverstand nicht mehr begabt sind.

(Heiterkeit)

Aber ich glaube auch, dass ein grosser Theil derjenigen Herren, die im Hause anwesend sind, sich in derselben traurigen Lage befindet wie ich.

(Heiterkeit)

Ja, meine Herren, wir müssen die Sache doch noch etwas näher prüfen.

Der Herr Kriegsminister hat schon ausgeführt, wenn wir im Jahre 1871 beim Friedensschluss Elsaß-Lothringen nicht wieder seinem alten Mutterlande einverleibt hätten—denn dass wollen Sie gütigst auch berücksichtigen, dass Elsaß-Lothringen ein deutsches Land ist—

(Bravo, rechts, bei den Nationalliberalen und in dem Zentrum),
dann hätten wir wahrscheinlich schon längst wieder Krieg gehabt. . . .

Sie wollen sich doch einigermassen vergegenwärtigen, dass das Nationalgefühl der Franzosen, gipfelnd in der gloire de la grande nation, bei ihnen die Hauptrolle spielt. Wenn wir ihnen Elsaß-Lothringen auch nicht genommen hätten, wenn wir sie nur überhaupt schlugen, so hätten doch die Franzosen stets das Bestreben gehabt, diese Schlappe, die sie erlitten haben, wieder wett zu machen—und an der Thatsache dass wir die Franzosen geschlagen haben, daran wird Herr Bebel nichts ändern können.

(Sehr gut! rechts. Heiterkeit)

[and so on for three more pages]

(Lebhaftes Bravo rechts)

Präsident: . . .

Die Mehrheit steht; die Vertragung ist beschlossen.

Zu einer persönlichen Bemerkung gebe ich das Wort dem Herrn Abgeordneten Bebel.

Abgeordneter **Bebel:** Meine Herren, der Herr Kriegsminister hat eine Reihen von Äusserungen von mir in einer Weise dargelegt, dass ich veranlasst bin, dieselben zu berichtigen, weil sie zum mindesten auf einer falschen Auffassung beruhen.

Der Herr Kriegsminister hat sich dagegen gewandt, dass ich von der Abtretung von Elsaß-Lothringen gesprochen hätte. Ich rufe das Haus zum Zeugen auf daß in meiner Rede auch nicht ein Satz oder ein Wort enthalten ist, das darauf hindeutet, dass ich den Gedanken habe aussprechen wollen, Deutschland sollte Elsaß-Lothringen abtreten. Seine ganze Ausführung also ist, soweit sie sich gegen diesen angenommenen Satz richtet, hinfällig.

[and so on and so forth]