

On Sinn and Bedeutung¹

[This paper was first published in 1892 in the *Zeitschrift für Philosophie und philosophische Kritik*, 100, pp. 25–50. It is Frege's most influential and best known work, containing his fullest account of his distinction between *Sinn* and *Bedeutung*.]

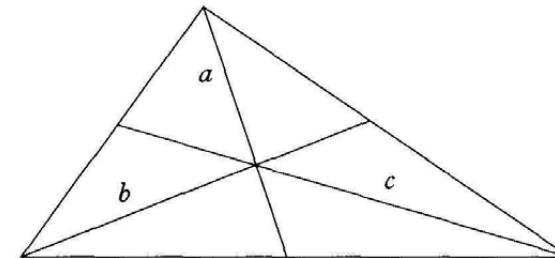
Equality² gives rise to challenging questions which are not altogether easy to answer. Is it a relation? A relation between objects, or between names or signs of objects? In my *Begriffsschrift* I assumed the latter.² The reasons which seem to favour this are the following: $a = a$ and $a = b$ are obviously statements of differing cognitive value [*Erkenntniswert*]; $a = a$ holds *a priori* and, according to Kant, is to be labelled analytic, while statements of the form $a = b$ often contain very valuable extensions of our knowledge and cannot always be established *a priori*. The discovery that the rising sun is not new every morning, but always the same, was one of the most fertile astronomical discoveries. Even today the reidentification of a small planet or a comet is not always a | matter of course. Now if we were to regard equality as a relation between that which the names ‘ a ’ and ‘ b ’ designate [*bedeuten*], it would seem that $a = b$ could not differ from $a = a$, i.e. provided $a = b$ is true. A relation would thereby be expressed of a thing to itself, and indeed one in which each thing stands to itself but to no other thing. What we apparently want to state by $a = b$ is that the signs or names ‘ a ’ and ‘ b ’ designate [*bedeuten*] the same thing, so that those signs themselves would be under discussion; a relation between them would be asserted. But this

¹ I use this word in the sense of identity [*Identität*] and understand ‘ $a = b$ ’ to have the sense of ‘ a is the same as b ’ or ‘ a and b coincide’.

² Translated by Max Black (*TPW*, pp. 56–78/*CP*, pp. 157–77). Page numbers in the margin are from the original journal. The translated text here is from the third edition of *TPW*, with minor revisions made in accordance with the policy adopted in the present volume – in particular, ‘Bedeutung’ (and cognates such as ‘*bedeutungslos*’) being left untranslated, and ‘*bedeuten*’ being rendered as ‘stand for’ (or occasionally as ‘designate’) in the second edition (but with the German always in square brackets following it), unless otherwise indicated. For discussion of this policy, and the problems involved in translating ‘Bedeutung’ and its cognates, see the Introduction, §4 above.

³ See esp. *BS*, §8 (pp. 64–5 above).

relation would hold between the names or signs only in so far as they named or designated something. It would be mediated by the connection of each of the two signs with the same designated thing. But this is arbitrary. Nobody can be forbidden to use any arbitrarily producible event or object as a sign for something. In that case the sentence $a = b$ would no longer be concerned with the subject matter, but only with its mode of designation; we would express no proper knowledge by its means. But in many cases this is just what we want to do. If the sign ‘ a ’ is distinguished from the sign ‘ b ’ only as an object (here, by means of its shape), not as a sign (i.e. not by the manner in which it designates something), the cognitive value of $a = a$ becomes essentially equal to that of $a = b$, provided $a = b$ is true. A difference can arise only if the difference between the signs corresponds to a difference in the mode of presentation [*Art des Gegebenseins*] of the thing designated. Let a , b , c be the lines connecting the vertices of a triangle with the midpoints of the opposite sides. The point of intersection of a and b is then the same as the point of intersection of b and c . So we have different designations for the same point, and these names (‘point of intersection of a and b ’, ‘point of intersection of b and c ’) likewise indicate the mode of presentation; and hence the statement contains actual knowledge.³



It is natural, now, to think of there being connected with a sign (name, combination of words, written mark), besides that which the sign designates, which may be called the *Bedeutung* of the sign, also what I should like to call the *sense* of the sign, wherein the mode of presentation is contained. In our example, accordingly, the | *Bedeutung* of the expressions ‘the point of intersection of a and b ’ and ‘the point of intersection of b and c ’ would be the same, but not their sense. The *Bedeutung* of ‘Evening Star’ would be the same as that of ‘Morning Star’, but not the sense.

³ A diagram is added here to illustrate Frege’s example. Compare this (rather simpler example) with the geometrical example Frege gave in *BS* in motivating his earlier distinction between ‘content’ and ‘mode of determination of content’ (see pp. 64–5 above). On the relationship between Frege’s earlier and later views, see the Introduction, pp. 21–2 above.

It is clear from the context that by sign and name I have here understood any designation figuring as a proper name, which thus has as its *Bedeutung* a definite object (this word taken in the widest range), but not a concept or a relation, which shall be discussed further in another article.⁴ The designation of a single object can also consist of several words or other signs. For brevity, let every such designation be called a proper name.

The sense of a proper name is grasped by everybody who is sufficiently familiar with the language or totality of designations to which it belongs;^B but this serves to illuminate only a single aspect of the *Bedeutung*, supposing it to have one. Comprehensive knowledge of the *Bedeutung* would require us to be able to say immediately whether any given sense attaches to it. To such knowledge we never attain.

The regular connection between a sign, its sense and its *Bedeutung* is of such a kind that to the sign there corresponds a definite sense and to that in turn a definite *Bedeutung*, while to a given *Bedeutung* (an object) there does not belong only a single sign. The same sense has different expressions in different languages or even in the same language. To be sure, exceptions to this regular behaviour occur. To every expression belonging to a complete totality of signs, there should certainly correspond a definite sense; but natural languages | often do not satisfy this condition, and one must be content if the same word has the same sense in the same context. It may perhaps be granted that every grammatically well-formed expression figuring as a proper name always has a sense. But this is not to say that to the sense there also corresponds a *Bedeutung*. The words ‘the celestial body most distant from the Earth’ have a sense, but it is very doubtful if they also have a *Bedeutung*. The expression ‘the least rapidly convergent series’ has a sense, but demonstrably there is no *Bedeutung*, since for every given convergent series, another convergent, but less rapidly convergent, series can be found. In grasping a sense, one is not thereby assured of a *Bedeutung*.

If words are used in the ordinary way, what one intends to speak of is their *Bedeutung*. It can also happen, however, that one wishes to talk about the words themselves or their sense. This happens, for instance, when the words of another are quoted. One’s own words then first

^A In the case of an actual proper name such as ‘Aristotle’ opinions as to the sense may differ. It might, for instance, be taken to be the following: the pupil of Plato and teacher of Alexander the Great. Anybody who does this will attach another sense to the sentence ‘Aristotle was born in Stagira’ than will someone who takes as the sense of the name: the teacher of Alexander the Great who was born in Stagira. So long as the *Bedeutung* remains the same, such variations of sense may be tolerated, although they are to be avoided in the theoretical structure of a demonstrative science and ought not to occur in a perfect language.

^B See ‘On Concept and Object’, pp. 181–93 below.

designate [*bedeuten*] words of the other speaker, and only the latter have their usual *Bedeutung*. We then have signs of signs. In writing, the words are in this case enclosed in quotation marks. Accordingly, a word standing between quotation marks must not be taken as having its ordinary *Bedeutung*.

In order to speak of the sense of an expression ‘*A*’ one may simply use the phrase ‘the sense of the expression “*A*”’. In indirect speech one talks about the sense, e.g., of another person’s remarks. It is quite clear that in this way of speaking words do not have their customary *Bedeutung* but designate [*bedeuten*] what is usually their sense. In order to have a short expression, we will say: in indirect speech, words are used *indirectly* or have their *indirect Bedeutung*. We distinguish accordingly the *customary* from the *indirect Bedeutung* of a word; and its *customary* sense from its *indirect* sense. The *indirect Bedeutung* of a word is accordingly its *customary* sense. Such exceptions must always be borne in mind if the mode of connection between sign, sense and *Bedeutung* in particular cases is to be correctly understood. |

The *Bedeutung* and sense of a sign are to be distinguished from the associated idea [*Vorstellung*]. If the *Bedeutung* of a sign is an object perceivable by the senses, my idea of it is an internal image, arising from memories of sense impressions which I have had and acts, both internal and external, which I have performed.^C Such an idea is often imbued with feeling; the clarity of its separate parts varies and oscillates. The same sense is not always connected, even in the same man, with the same idea. The idea is subjective: one man’s idea is not that of another. There result, as a matter of course, a variety of differences in the ideas associated with the same sense. A painter, a horseman, and a zoologist will probably connect different ideas with the name ‘Bucephalus’. This constitutes an essential distinction between the idea and the sign’s sense, which may be the common property of many people, and so is not a part or a mode of the individual mind. For one can hardly deny that mankind has a common store of thoughts which is transmitted from one generation to another.^D

In the light of this, one need have no scruples in speaking simply of the sense, whereas in the case of an idea one must, strictly speaking, add whom it belongs to and at what time. It might perhaps be said: just as one man connects this idea, and another that idea, with the same

^C We may include with ideas intuitions [*Anschauungen*]: here, sense impressions and acts themselves take the place of the traces which they have left in the mind. The distinction is unimportant for our purpose, especially since memories of sense impressions and acts always go along with such impressions and acts themselves to complete the perceptual image [*Anschauungsbild*]. One may on the other hand understand intuition as including any object in so far as it is sensibly perceptible or spatial.

^D Hence it is inadvisable to use the word ‘idea’ to designate something so basically different.

word, so also one man can associate this sense and another that sense. But there still remains a difference in the mode of connection. They are not prevented from grasping the same sense; | but they cannot have the same idea. *Si duo idem faciunt, non est idem.* If two persons picture the same thing, each still has his own idea. It is indeed sometimes possible to establish differences in the ideas, or even in the sensations, of different men; but an exact comparison is not possible, because we cannot have both ideas together in the same consciousness.

The *Bedeutung* of a proper name is the object itself which we designate by using it; the idea which we have in that case is wholly subjective; in between lies the sense, which is indeed no longer subjective like the idea, but is yet not the object itself. The following analogy will perhaps clarify these relationships. Somebody observes the Moon through a telescope. I compare the Moon itself to the *Bedeutung*; it is the object of the observation, mediated by the real image projected by the object glass in the interior of the telescope, and by the retinal image of the observer. The former I compare to the sense, the latter is like the idea or intuition [*Anschauung*]. The optical image in the telescope is indeed one-sided and dependent upon the standpoint of observation; but it is still objective, inasmuch as it can be used by several observers. At any rate it could be arranged for several to use it simultaneously. But each one would have his own retinal image. On account of the diverse shapes of the observers' eyes, even a geometrical congruence could hardly be achieved, and an actual coincidence would be out of the question. This analogy might be developed still further, by assuming A's retinal image made visible to B; or A might also see his own retinal image in a mirror. In this way we might perhaps show how an idea can itself be taken as an object, but as such is not for the observer what it directly is for the person having the idea. But to pursue this would take us too far afield.

We can now recognize three levels of difference between words, expressions, or whole sentences. The difference may concern at most the ideas, or the sense but not the *Bedeutung*, or, finally, the *Bedeutung* as well. With respect to | the first level, it is to be noted that, on account of the uncertain connection of ideas with words, a difference may hold for one person, which another does not find. The difference between a translation and the original text should properly not overstep the first level. To the possible differences here belong also the colouring and shading which poetic eloquence seeks to give to the sense. Such colouring and shading are not objective, and must be evoked by each hearer or reader according to the hints of the poet or the speaker. Without some affinity in human ideas art would certainly be impossible; but it can never be exactly determined how far the intentions of the poet are realized.

In what follows there will be no further discussion of ideas and intuitions; they have been mentioned here only to ensure that the idea

aroused in the hearer by a word shall not be confused with its sense or its *Bedeutung*.

To make short and exact expressions possible, let the following phraseology be established:

A proper name (word, sign, combination of signs, expression) *expresses* its sense, *stands for* [bedeutet] or *designates* [bezeichnet] its *Bedeutung*. By employing a sign we express its sense and designate its *Bedeutung*.

Idealists or sceptics will perhaps long since have objected: 'You talk, without further ado, of the Moon as an object; but how do you know that the name "the Moon" has any *Bedeutung*? How do you know that anything whatsoever has a *Bedeutung*?' I reply that when we say 'the Moon', we do not intend to speak of our idea of the Moon, nor are we satisfied with the sense alone, but we presuppose a *Bedeutung*. To assume that in the sentence 'The Moon is smaller than the Earth' the idea of the Moon is in question, would be flatly to misunderstand the sense. If this is what the speaker wanted, he would use the phrase 'my idea of the Moon'. Now we can of course be mistaken in the presupposition, and such mistakes have indeed occurred. But the question whether the presupposition is perhaps always mistaken need | not be answered here; in order to justify speaking of the *Bedeutung* of a sign, it is enough, at first, to point out our intention in speaking or thinking. (We must then add the reservation: provided such a *Bedeutung* exists.)

So far we have considered the sense and *Bedeutung* only of such expressions, words, or signs as we have called proper names. We now inquire concerning the sense and *Bedeutung* of an entire assertoric sentence. Such a sentence contains a thought.^E Is this thought, now, to be regarded as its sense or its *Bedeutung*? Let us assume for the time being that the sentence has a *Bedeutung*. If we now replace one word of the sentence by another having the same *Bedeutung*, but a different sense, this can have no effect upon the *Bedeutung* of the sentence. Yet we can see that in such a case the thought changes; since, e.g., the thought in the sentence 'The Morning Star is a body illuminated by the Sun' differs from that in the sentence 'The Evening Star is a body illuminated by the Sun'. Anybody who did not know that the Evening Star is the Morning Star might hold the one thought to be true, the other false. The thought, accordingly, cannot be the *Bedeutung* of the sentence, but must rather be considered as its sense. What is the position now with regard to the *Bedeutung*? Have we a right even to inquire about it? Is it possible that a sentence as a whole has only a sense, but no *Bedeutung*?

^E By a thought I understand not the subjective performance of thinking but its objective content, which is capable of being the common property of several thinkers.

At any rate, one might expect that such sentences occur, just as there are parts of sentences having sense but no *Bedeutung*. And sentences which contain proper names without *Bedeutung* will be of this kind. The sentence 'Odysseus was set ashore at Ithaca while sound asleep' obviously has a sense. But since it is doubtful whether the name 'Odysseus', occurring therein, has a *Bedeutung*, it is also doubtful whether the whole sentence does. Yet it is certain, nevertheless, that anyone who seriously took the sentence to be true or false would ascribe to the name 'Odysseus' a *Bedeutung*, not merely a sense; for it is of the *Bedeutung* of the name that the predicate is affirmed or denied. Whoever does not admit the name has a *Bedeutung* can neither apply nor withhold the predicate. But in that case it would be superfluous to advance to the *Bedeutung* of the name; one could be satisfied with the sense, if one wanted to go no further than the thought. If it were a question only of the sense of the sentence, the thought, it would be needless to bother with the *Bedeutung* of a part of the sentence; only the sense, not the *Bedeutung*, of the part is relevant to the sense of the whole sentence. The thought remains the same whether 'Odysseus' has a *Bedeutung* or not. The fact that we concern ourselves at all about the *Bedeutung* of a part of the sentence indicates that we generally recognize and expect a *Bedeutung* for the sentence itself. The thought loses value for us as soon as we recognize that the *Bedeutung* of one of its parts is missing. We are therefore justified in not being satisfied with the sense of a sentence, and in inquiring also as to its *Bedeutung*. But now why do we want every proper name to have not only a sense, but also a *Bedeutung*? Why is the thought not enough for us? Because, and to the extent that, we are concerned with its truth-value. This is not always the case. In hearing an epic poem, for instance, apart from the euphony of the language we are interested only in the sense of the sentences and the images and feelings thereby aroused. The question of truth would cause us to abandon aesthetic delight for an attitude of scientific investigation. Hence it is a matter of no concern to us whether the name 'Odysseus', for instance, has a *Bedeutung*, so long as we accept the poem as a work of art.^F It is the striving for truth that drives us always to advance from the sense to the *Bedeutung*.

We have seen that the *Bedeutung* of a sentence may always be sought, whenever the *Bedeutung* of its components is involved; and that this is the case when and only when we are inquiring after the truth-value.

We are therefore driven into accepting the *truth-value* of a sentence as constituting its *Bedeutung*. By the truth-value of a sentence I understand the circumstance that it is true or false. There are no further

^F It would be desirable to have a special term for signs intended to have only sense. If we name them say, representations [*Bilder*], the words of the actors on the stage would be representations; indeed the actor himself would be a representation.

truth-values. For brevity I call the one the True, the other the False. Every assertoric sentence concerned with the *Bedeutung* of its words is therefore to be regarded as a proper name, and its *Bedeutung*, if it has one, is either the True or the False. These two objects are recognized, if only implicitly, by everybody who judges something to be true – and so even by a sceptic. The designation of the truth-values as objects may appear to be an arbitrary fancy or perhaps a mere play upon words, from which no profound consequences could be drawn. What I am calling an object can be more exactly discussed only in connection with concept and relation. I will reserve this for another article.⁵ But so much should already be clear, that in every judgement,^G no matter how trivial, the step from the level of thoughts to the level of *Bedeutung* (the objective) has already been taken.

One might be tempted to regard the relation of the thought to the True not as that of sense to *Bedeutung*, but rather as that of subject to predicate. One can, indeed, say: 'The thought that 5 is a prime number is true'. But closer examination shows that nothing more has been said than in the simple sentence '5 is a prime number'. The truth claim arises in each case from the form of the assertoric sentence, and when the latter lacks its usual force, e.g., in the mouth of an actor upon the stage, even the sentence 'The thought that 5 is a prime number is true' contains only a thought, and indeed the same thought as the simple '5 is a prime number'. It follows that the relation of the thought to the True may not be compared with that of subject to predicate. | Subject and predicate (understood in the logical sense) are just elements of thought; they stand on the same level for knowledge. By combining subject and predicate, one reaches only a thought, never passes from a sense to its *Bedeutung*, never from a thought to its truth-value. One moves at the same level but never advances from one level to the next. A truth-value cannot be a part of a thought, any more than, say, the Sun can, for it is not a sense but an object.

If our supposition that the *Bedeutung* of a sentence is its truth-value is correct, the latter must remain unchanged when a part of the sentence is replaced by an expression with the same *Bedeutung*. And this is in fact the case. Leibniz gives the definition: '*Eadem sunt, quae sibi mutuo substitui possunt, salva veritate*'.⁶ If we are dealing with sentences for which the *Bedeutung* of their component parts is at all relevant, then what feature except the truth-value can be found that belongs to such

^G A judgement for me is not the mere grasping of a thought, but the admission [*Anerkennung*] of its truth.

⁵ See 'On Concept and Object', pp. 181–93 below.

⁶ 'Those things are the same which can be substituted for one another without loss of truth.' This is just the same Leibnizian principle that Frege took as his definition of identity in §65 of the *Foundations* (the difference in formulation is trivial); see p. 112 above.

sentences quite generally and remains unchanged by substitutions of the kind just mentioned?

If now the truth-value of a sentence is its *Bedeutung*, then on the one hand all true sentences have the same *Bedeutung* and so, on the other hand, do all false sentences. From this we see that in the *Bedeutung* of the sentence all that is specific is obliterated. We can never be concerned only with the *Bedeutung* of a sentence; but again the mere thought alone yields no knowledge, but only the thought together with its *Bedeutung*, i.e. its truth-value. Judgements can be regarded as advances from a thought to a truth-value. Naturally this cannot be a definition. Judgement is something quite peculiar and incomparable. One might also say that judgements are distinctions of parts within truth-values. Such distinction occurs by a return to the thought. To every sense attaching to a truth-value would correspond its own manner of analysis. However, I have here used the word 'part' in a special sense. I have in fact transferred the relation between the parts and the whole of the sentence to its *Bedeutung*, by calling the *Bedeutung* of a word part of the *Bedeutung* of the sentence, if the word itself | is a part of the sentence. This way of speaking can certainly be attacked, because the whole *Bedeutung* and one part of it do not suffice to determine the remainder, and because the word 'part' is already used of bodies in another sense. A special term would need to be invented.

The supposition that the truth-value of a sentence is its *Bedeutung* shall now be put to further test. We have found that the truth-value of a sentence remains unchanged when an expression in it is replaced by another with the same *Bedeutung*:⁷ but we have not yet considered the case in which the expression to be replaced is itself a sentence. Now if our view is correct, the truth-value of a sentence containing another as part must remain unchanged when the part is replaced by another sentence having the same truth-value. Exceptions are to be expected when the whole sentence or its part is direct or indirect quotation; for in such cases, as we have seen, the words do not have their customary *Bedeutung*. In direct quotation, a sentence designates [bedeutet] another sentence, and in indirect speech a thought.

We are thus led to consider subordinate sentences or clauses. These occur as parts of a sentence complex, which is, from the logical standpoint, likewise a sentence – a main sentence. But here we meet the question whether it is also true of the subordinate sentence that its *Bedeutung* is a truth-value. Of indirect speech we already know the opposite. Grammarians view subordinate clauses as representatives of parts of sentences and divide them accordingly into noun clauses, adjective clauses, adverbial clauses. This might generate the supposition that the *Bedeutung* of

⁷ 'wenn wir darin einen Ausdruck durch einen gleichbedeutenden ersetzen'.

a subordinate clause was not a truth-value but rather of the same kind as the *Bedeutung* of a noun or adjective or adverb – in short, of a part of a sentence, whose sense was not a thought but only a part of a thought. Only a more thorough investigation can clarify the issue. In so doing, we shall not follow the grammatical categories strictly, but rather group together what is logically of the same kind. Let us first search for cases in which the sense of the subordinate clause, as we have just supposed, is not an independent thought. |

The case of an abstract noun clause,⁸ introduced by 'that', includes the case of indirect speech, in which we have seen the words to have their indirect *Bedeutung*, coincident with what is customarily their sense. In this case, then, the subordinate clause has for its *Bedeutung* a thought, not a truth-value, and for its sense not a thought, but the sense of the words 'the thought that . . .', which is only a part of the thought in the entire complex sentence. This happens after 'say', 'hear', 'be of the opinion', 'be convinced', 'conclude', and similar words.⁹ There is a different, and indeed somewhat complicated, situation after words like 'recognize', 'know', 'fancy',⁹ which are to be considered later.

That in the cases of the first kind the *Bedeutung* of the subordinate clause is in fact the thought can also be recognized by seeing that it is indifferent to the truth of the whole whether the subordinate clause is true or false. Let us compare, for instance, the two sentences 'Copernicus believed that the planetary orbits are circles' and 'Copernicus believed that the apparent motion of the Sun is produced by the real motion of the Earth'. One subordinate clause can be substituted for the other without harm to the truth. The main clause and the subordinate clause together have as their sense only a single thought, and the truth of the whole includes neither the truth nor the untruth of the subordinate clause. In such cases it is not permissible to replace one expression in the subordinate clause by another having the same customary *Bedeutung*, but only by one having the same indirect *Bedeutung*, i.e. the same customary sense. Somebody might conclude: the *Bedeutung* of a sentence is not its truth-value, for in that case it could always be replaced by another sentence of the same truth-value. But this proves too much; one might just as well claim that the *Bedeutung* of 'Morning Star' is not

⁸ In 'A lied that he had seen B', the subordinate clause designates [bedeutet] a thought, of which it is being said, firstly, that A asserted it as true, and secondly, that A was convinced of its falsity.

⁹ Frege probably means clauses grammatically replaceable by an abstract noun-phrase; e.g. 'Smith denies that dragons exist' = 'Smith denies the existence of dragons'; or again, in this context, after 'denies', 'that Brown is wise' is replaceable by 'the wisdom of Brown'. (Tr.)

⁹ The German words here are 'erkennen', 'wissen' and 'wöhnen'. The last means 'to imagine', but with the implication of doing so *wrongly*.

Venus, since one may not always say ‘Venus’ in place of ‘Morning Star’. One has the right to conclude only that the *Bedeutung* of a sentence is not *always* its truth-value, and that ‘Morning Star’ does not | always stand for [*bedeuten*] the planet Venus, viz. when the word has its indirect *Bedeutung*. An exception of such a kind occurs in the subordinate clause just considered, which has a thought as its *Bedeutung*.

If one says ‘It seems that . . .’ one means [*meint*] ‘It seems to me that . . .’ or ‘I think that . . .’. We therefore have the same case again. The situation is similar in the case of expressions such as ‘to be pleased’, ‘to regret’, ‘to approve’, ‘to blame’, ‘to hope’, ‘to fear’. If, toward the end of the battle of Waterloo,¹⁰ Wellington was glad that the Prussians were coming, the basis for his joy was a conviction. Had he been deceived, he would have been no less pleased so long as his illusion lasted; and before he became so convinced he could not have been pleased that the Prussians were coming – even though in fact they might have been already approaching.

Just as a conviction or a belief is the ground of a feeling, it can, as in inference, also be the ground of a conviction. In the sentence ‘Columbus inferred from the roundness of the Earth that he could reach India by travelling towards the west’, we have as the *Bedeutungen* of the parts two thoughts, that the Earth is round, and that Columbus by travelling to the west could reach India. All that is relevant here is that Columbus was convinced of both, and that the one conviction was a ground for the other. Whether the Earth is really round and Columbus could really reach India by travelling west, as he thought, is immaterial to the truth of our sentence; but it is not immaterial whether we replace ‘the Earth’ by ‘the planet which is accompanied by a moon whose diameter is greater than the fourth part of its own’. Here also we have the indirect *Bedeutung* of the words.

Adverbial final clauses beginning ‘in order that’ also belong here; for obviously the purpose is a thought; therefore: indirect *Bedeutung* for the words, subjunctive mood.

A subordinate clause with ‘that’ after ‘command’, ‘ask’, ‘forbid’, would appear in direct speech as an imperative. Such a sentence has no *Bedeutung* but only a sense. A command, a request, are indeed not thoughts, but they stand on the same level as thoughts. Hence in subordinate clauses depending upon ‘command’, | ‘ask’, etc., words have their indirect *Bedeutung*. The *Bedeutung* of such a clause is therefore not | a truth-value but a command, a request, and so forth.

The case is similar for the dependent question in phrases such as ‘doubt whether’, ‘not to know what’. It is easy to see that here also the words are to be taken to have their indirect *Bedeutung*. Dependent clauses

expressing questions beginning with ‘who’, ‘what’, ‘where’, ‘when’, ‘how’, ‘by what means’, etc., seem at times to approximate very closely to adverbial clauses in which words have their customary *Bedeutung*. These cases are distinguished linguistically [in German] by the mood of the verb. With the subjunctive, we have a dependent question and the words have their indirect *Bedeutung*, so that a proper name cannot in general be replaced by another name of the same object.

In the cases so far considered the words of the subordinate clauses had their indirect *Bedeutung*, and this made it clear that the *Bedeutung* of the subordinate clause itself was indirect, i.e. not a truth-value but a thought, a command, a request, a question. The subordinate clause could be regarded as a noun, indeed one could say: as a proper name of that thought, that command, etc., which it represented in the context of the sentence structure.

We now come to other subordinate clauses, in which the words do have their customary *Bedeutung* without however a thought occurring as sense and a truth-value as *Bedeutung*. How this is possible is best made clear by examples.

‘Whoever discovered the elliptic form of the planetary orbits died in misery.’

If the sense of the subordinate clause were here a thought, it would have to be possible to express it also in a separate sentence. But it does not work, because the grammatical subject ‘whoever’ has no independent sense and only mediates the relation with the consequent clause ‘died in misery’. For this reason the sense of the subordinate clause is not a complete thought, and its *Bedeutung* is Kepler, not a truth-value. One might object that the sense of the whole does contain a thought as part, viz. that there was somebody who first discovered the elliptic form of the planetary orbits; for whoever takes the whole to be true | cannot deny this part. This is undoubtedly so; but only because otherwise the dependent clause ‘whoever discovered the elliptic form of the planetary orbits’ would have no *Bedeutung*. If anything is asserted there is always an obvious presupposition that the simple or compound proper names used have a *Bedeutung*. If therefore one asserts ‘Kepler died in misery’, there is a presupposition that the name ‘Kepler’ designates something; but it does not follow that the sense of the sentence ‘Kepler died in misery’ contains the thought that the name ‘Kepler’ designates something. If this were the case the negation would have to run not

‘Kepler did not die in misery’,

but

‘Kepler did not die in misery, or the name “Kepler” is *bedeutungslos*’.

¹⁰ Frege uses the Prussian name for the battle ‘Belle-Alliance’. (*Tr.*)

That the name 'Kepler' designates something is just as much a presupposition for the assertion

'Kepler died in misery'

as for the contrary assertion. Now languages have the fault of containing expressions which fail to designate an object (although their grammatical form seems to qualify them for that purpose) because the truth of some sentence is a prerequisite. Thus it depends on the truth of the sentence

'There was someone who discovered the elliptic form of the planetary orbits'

whether the subordinate clause

'whoever discovered the elliptic form of the planetary orbits'

really designates an object, or only seems to do so while in fact is *bedeutungslos*. And thus it may appear as if our subordinate clause contained as a part of its sense the thought that there was somebody who discovered the elliptic form of the planetary orbits. If this were right, the negation would run:

'Either whoever discovered the elliptic form of the planetary orbits did not die in misery or there was nobody who discovered the elliptic form of the planetary orbits'. |

This arises from an imperfection of language, from which even the symbolic language of mathematical analysis is not altogether free; even there combinations of symbols can occur that seem to stand for [*bedeuten*] something but (at least so far) are *bedeutungslos*, e.g. divergent infinite series. This can be avoided, e.g., by means of the special stipulation that divergent infinite series shall stand for [*bedeuten*] the number 0.¹¹ A logically perfect language (*Begriffsschrift*) should satisfy the conditions, that every expression grammatically well constructed as a proper name out of signs already introduced shall in fact designate an object, and that no new sign shall be introduced as a proper name without being secured a *Bedeutung*. The logic looks contain warnings against logical mistakes arising from the ambiguity of expressions. I regard as no less pertinent a warning against apparent proper names that have no *Bedeutung*. The

history of mathematics supplies errors which have arisen in this way. This lends itself to demagogic abuse as easily as ambiguity – perhaps more easily. 'The will of the people' can serve as an example; for it is easy to establish that there is at any rate no generally accepted *Bedeutung* for this expression. It is therefore by no means unimportant to eliminate the source of these mistakes, at least in science, once and for all. Then such objections as the one discussed above would become impossible, because it could never depend upon the truth of a thought whether a proper name had a *Bedeutung*.

With the consideration of these noun clauses may be coupled that of types of adjective and adverbial clauses which are logically in close relation to them.

Adjective clauses also serve to construct compound proper names, though, unlike noun clauses, they are not sufficient by themselves for this purpose. These adjective clauses are to be regarded as equivalent to adjectives. Instead of 'the square root of 4 which is smaller than 0', one can also say 'the negative square root of 4'. We have here the case of a compound proper name constructed from the expression for a concept with the help of the singular definite article. This is at any rate permissible if the concept applies to one | and only one single object.¹ Expressions for concepts can be so constructed that marks¹² of a concept are given by adjective clauses as, in our example, by the clause 'which is smaller than 0'. It is evident that such an adjective clause cannot have a thought as sense or a truth-value as *Bedeutung*, any more than the noun clause could. Its sense, which can also in many cases be expressed by a single adjective, is only a part of a thought. Here, as in the case of the noun clause, there is no independent subject and therefore no possibility of reproducing the sense of the subordinate clause in an independent sentence.

Places, instants, stretches of time, logically considered, are objects; hence the linguistic designation of a definite place, a definite instant, or a stretch of time is to be regarded as a proper name. Now adverbial clauses of place and time can be used to construct such a proper name in much the same way as we have seen noun and adjective clauses can. In the same way, expressions for concepts that apply to places, etc., can be constructed. It is to be noted here also that the sense of these subordinate clauses cannot be reproduced in an independent sentence, since

¹¹ In accordance with what was said above, an expression of the kind in question must actually always be assured of a *Bedeutung*, by means of a special stipulation, e.g. by the convention that 0 shall count as its *Bedeutung* when the concept applies to no object or to more than one. [See fn. 11 above.]

¹² For the notion of a 'mark' ('Merkmal'), see *GL*, §53 (pp. 102–3 above); *CO*, pp. 189–90 below.

an essential component, viz. the determination of place or time, is missing and is just indicated by a relative pronoun or a conjunction.¹

In conditional clauses, also, there most often | recognizably occurs an indefinite indicator, with a correlative indicator in the dependent clause. (We have already seen this occur in noun, adjective, and adverbial clauses.) In so far as each indicator relates to the other, both clauses together form a connected whole, which as a rule expresses only a single thought. In the sentence

'If a number is less than 1 and greater than 0, its square is less than 1 and greater than 0'

the component in question is 'a number' in the antecedent clause and 'its' in the consequent clause. It is by means of this very indefiniteness that the sense acquires the generality expected of a law. It is this which is responsible for the fact that the antecedent clause alone has no complete thought as its sense and in combination with the consequent clause expresses one and only one thought, whose parts are no longer thoughts. It is, in general, incorrect to say that in the hypothetical judgement two judgements are put in reciprocal relationship. If this or something similar is said, the word 'judgement' is used in the same sense as I have connected with the word 'thought', so that I would use the formulation: 'A hypothetical thought establishes a reciprocal relationship between two thoughts'. This could be true only if an indefinite indicator is absent;^K but in such a case there would also be no generality.

If an instant of time is to be indefinitely indicated in both the antecedent and the consequent clause, this is often achieved merely by using

¹ In the case of these sentences, various interpretations are easily possible. The sense of the sentence 'After Schleswig-Holstein was separated from Denmark, Prussia and Austria quarrelled' can also be rendered in the form 'After the separation of Schleswig-Holstein from Denmark, Prussia and Austria quarrelled'. In this version, it is surely sufficiently clear that the sense is not to be taken as having as a part the thought that Schleswig-Holstein was once separated from Denmark, but that this is the necessary presupposition in order for the expression 'after the separation of Schleswig-Holstein from Denmark' to have a *Bedeutung* at all. To be sure, our sentence can also be interpreted as saying that Schleswig-Holstein was once separated from Denmark. We then have a case which is to be considered later. In order to understand the difference more clearly, let us project ourselves into the mind of a Chinese who, having little knowledge of European history, believes it to be false that Schleswig-Holstein was ever separated from Denmark. He will take our sentence, in the first version, to be neither true nor false but will deny it to have any *Bedeutung*, on the ground that its subordinate clause lacks a *Bedeutung*. This clause would only apparently determine a time. If he interpreted our sentence in the second way, however, he would find a thought expressed in it which he would take to be false, beside a part which would be *bedeutungslos* for him.

^K At times there is no linguistically explicit indicator and one must be read off from the entire context.

the present tense of the verb, which in such a case however does not indicate the temporal present. This grammatical form is then the indefinite indicator in the main and subordinate clauses. An example of this is: 'When | the Sun is in the tropic of Cancer, the longest day in the northern hemisphere occurs'. Here, also, it is impossible to express the sense of the subordinate clause in a full sentence, because this sense is not a complete thought. If we say 'The Sun is in the tropic of Cancer', this would refer to our present time¹³ and thereby change the sense. Neither is the sense of the main clause a thought; only the whole, composed of main and subordinate clauses, has such a sense. It may be added that several common components may be indefinitely indicated in the antecedent and consequent clauses.

It is clear that noun clauses with 'who' or 'what' and adverbial clauses with 'where', 'when', 'wherever', 'whenever' are often to be interpreted as having the sense of antecedent clauses, e.g. 'Who touches pitch, defiles himself'.

Adjective clauses can also take the place of conditional clauses. Thus the sense of the sentence previously used can be given in the form 'The square of a number which is less than 1 and greater than 0 is less than 1 and greater than 0'.

The situation is quite different if the common component of the two clauses is designated by a proper name. In the sentence:

'Napoleon, who recognized the danger to his right flank, himself led his guards against the enemy position'

two thoughts are expressed:

- (1) Napoleon recognized the danger to his right flank;
- (2) Napoleon himself led his guards against the enemy position.

When and where this happened is to be fixed only by the context, but is nevertheless to be taken as definitely determined thereby. If the entire sentence is uttered as an assertion, we thereby simultaneously assert both component sentences. If one of the parts is false, the whole is false. Here we have the case that the subordinate clause by itself has a complete thought as sense (if we complete it by indication of place and time). The *Bedeutung* of the subordinate clause is accordingly a truth-value. We can therefore expect that it may be replaced, without harm to the truth-value of the whole, by a sentence having the | same truth-value. This is indeed the case; but it is to be noted that for purely grammatical reasons, its subject must be 'Napoleon', for only then can it be brought into the form of an adjective clause attaching to 'Napoleon'. But if the

¹³ 'auf unsere Gegenwart beziehen'.

demand that it be expressed in this form is waived, and the connection shown by 'and', this restriction disappears.

Subsidiary clauses beginning with 'although' also express complete thoughts. This conjunction actually has no sense and does not change the sense of the clause but only illuminates it in a peculiar fashion.^L We could indeed replace the concessive clause without harm to the truth of the whole by another of the same truth-value; but the light in which the clause is placed by the conjunction might then easily appear unsuitable, as if a song with a sad subject were to be sung in a lively fashion.

In the last cases the truth of the whole included the truth of the component clauses. The case is different if an antecedent clause expresses a complete thought by containing, in place of an indefinite indicator, a proper name or something which is to be regarded as equivalent. In the sentence

'If the Sun has already risen, the sky is very cloudy'

the time is the present, that is to say, definite. And the place is also to be thought of as definite. Here it can be said that a relation between the truth-values of antecedent and consequent clauses has been asserted, viz. that the case does not occur in which the antecedent stands for [*bedeute*] the True and the consequent for the False. Accordingly, our sentence is true if the Sun has not yet risen, whether the sky is very cloudy or not, and also if the Sun has risen and the sky is very cloudy. Since only truth-values are here in question, each component clause can be replaced by another of the same truth-value without changing the truth-value of the whole. To be sure, the light in which the subject then appears would usually be unsuitable; the thought might easily seem distorted; | but this has nothing to do with its truth-value. One must always observe that there are overtones of subsidiary thoughts, which are however not explicitly expressed and therefore should not be reckoned in the sense. Hence, also, no account need be taken of their truth-values.^M

The simplest cases have now been discussed. Let us review what we have learned.

The subordinate clause usually has for its sense not a thought, but only a part of one, and consequently no truth-value as *Bedeutung*. The reason for this is either that the words in the subordinate clause have their indirect *Bedeutung*, so that the *Bedeutung*, not the sense, of the subordinate clause is a thought; or else that, on account of the presence of an indefinite indicator, the subordinate clause is incomplete and expresses

^L Similarly in the case of 'but', 'yet'.

^M The thought of our sentence might also be expressed thus: 'Either the Sun has not risen yet or the sky is very cloudy' – which shows how this kind of sentence connection is to be understood.

a thought only when combined with the main clause. It may happen, however, that the sense of the subsidiary clause is a complete thought, in which case it can be replaced by another of the same truth-value without harm to the truth of the whole – provided there are no grammatical obstacles.

An examination of all the subordinate clauses which one may encounter will soon provide some which do not fit well into these categories. The reason, so far as I can see, is that these subordinate clauses have no such simple sense. Almost always, it seems, we connect with the main thoughts expressed by us subsidiary thoughts which, although not expressed, are associated with our words, in accordance with psychological laws, by the hearer. And since the subsidiary thought appears to be connected with our words on its own account, almost like the main thought itself, we want it also to be expressed. The sense of the sentence is thereby enriched, and it may well happen that we have more simple thoughts than clauses. In many cases the sentence must be understood in this way, in others it may be doubtful whether the subsidiary thought belongs to the sense of the sentence or | only accompanies it.^N One might perhaps find that the sentence

'Napoleon, who recognized the danger to his right flank, himself led his guards against the enemy position'

expresses not only the two thoughts shown above, but also the thought that the knowledge of the danger was the reason why he led the guards against the enemy position. One may in fact doubt whether this thought is just slightly suggested or really expressed. Let the question be considered whether our sentence is false if Napoleon's decision had already been made before he recognized the danger. If our sentence could be true in spite of this, the subsidiary thought should not be understood as part of the sense. One would probably decide in favour of this. The alternative would make for a quite complicated situation: we should have more simple thoughts than clauses. If the sentence

'Napoleon recognized the danger to his right flank'

were now to be replaced by another having the same truth-value, e.g.

'Napoleon was already more than 45 years old',

not only would our first thought be changed, but also our third one. Hence the truth-value of the latter might change – viz. if his age was not

^N This may be important for the question whether an assertion is a lie, or an oath a perjury.

the reason for the decision to lead the guards against the enemy. This shows why clauses of equal truth-value cannot always be substituted for one another in such cases. The clause expresses more through its connection with another than it does in isolation.

Let us now consider cases where this regularly happens. In the sentence

'Bebel fancies [*wähnt*]¹⁴ that the return of Alsace-Lorraine would appease France's desire for revenge'

two thoughts are expressed, which are not however shown by means of antecedent and consequent clauses, viz.

- (1) Bebel believes that the return of Alsace-Lorraine would appease France's desire for revenge; |
- 4 (2) the return of Alsace-Lorraine would not appease France's desire for revenge.

In the expression of the first thought, the words of the subordinate clause have their indirect *Bedeutung*, while the same words have their customary *Bedeutung* in the expression of the second thought. This shows that the subordinate clause in our original complex sentence is to be taken twice over, with different *Bedeutungen*, of which one is a thought, the other a truth-value. Since the truth-value is not the whole *Bedeutung* of the subordinate clause, we cannot simply replace the latter by another of equal truth-value. Similar considerations apply to expressions such as 'know', 'recognize', 'it is well known'.¹⁵

By means of a subordinate causal clause and the associated main clause we express several thoughts, which however do not correspond separately to the original clauses. In the sentence 'Because ice is less dense than water, it floats on water' we have

- (1) Ice is less dense than water;
- (2) If anything is less dense than water, it floats on water;
- (3) Ice floats on water.

The third thought, however, need not be explicitly introduced, since it is contained in the remaining two. On the other hand, neither the first and third nor the second and third combined would furnish the sense of our sentence. It can now be seen that our subordinate clause

'because ice is less dense than water'

¹⁴ See fn. 9 above.

¹⁵ 'wissen', 'erkennen', 'es ist bekannt'.

expresses our first thought, as well as a part of our second. This is how it comes to pass that our subsidiary clause cannot be simply replaced by another of equal truth-value; for this would alter our second thought and thereby might well alter its truth-value.

The situation is similar in the sentence

'If iron were less dense than water, it would float on water'. |

Here we have the two thoughts that iron is not less dense than water, and that something floats on water if it is less dense than water. The subsidiary clause again expresses one thought and a part of the other.

If we interpret the sentence already considered,

'After Schleswig-Holstein was separated from Denmark, Prussia and Austria quarrelled',

in such a way that it expresses the thought that Schleswig-Holstein was once separated from Denmark, we have first this thought, and secondly the thought that, at a time more closely determined by the subordinate clause, Prussia and Austria quarrelled. Here also the subordinate clause expresses not only one thought but also a part of another. Therefore it may not in general be replaced by another of the same truth-value.

It is hard to exhaust all the possibilities given by language; but I hope to have brought to light at least the essential reasons why a subordinate clause may not always be replaced by another of equal truth-value without harm to the truth of the whole sentence structure. These reasons arise:

- (1) when the subordinate clause does not stand for [*bedeutet*] a truth-value, inasmuch as it expresses only a part of a thought;
- (2) when the subordinate clause does stand for [*bedeutet*] a truth-value, but is not restricted to so doing, inasmuch as its sense includes one thought and part of another.

The first case arises:

- (a) for words having indirect *Bedeutung*,
- (b) if a part of the sentence is only an indefinite indicator instead of a proper name.

In the second case, the subsidiary clause may have to be taken twice over, viz. once in its customary *Bedeutung*, and the other time in its indirect *Bedeutung*; or the sense of a part of the subordinate clause may likewise be a component of another thought, which, taken together with

the thought directly expressed by the subordinate clause, makes up the sense of the whole sentence.

It follows with sufficient probability from the foregoing that the cases where a subordinate clause is not replaceable by another of the same value cannot be brought in disproof of our view | that a truth-value is the *Bedeutung* of a sentence that has a thought as its sense.

Let us return to our starting-point.

If we found ' $a = a$ ' and ' $a = b$ ' to have different cognitive values, the explanation is that for the purpose of acquiring knowledge, the sense of the sentence, viz., the thought expressed by it, is no less relevant than its *Bedeutung*, i.e. its truth-value. If now $a = b$, then indeed the *Bedeutung* of ' b ' is the same as that of ' a ', and hence the truth-value of ' $a = b$ ' is the same as that of ' $a = a$ '. In spite of this, the sense of ' b ' may differ from the sense of ' a ', and thereby the thought expressed by ' $a = b$ ' will differ from that expressed by ' $a = a$ '. In that case the two sentences do not have the same cognitive value. If we understand by 'judgement' the advance from the thought to its truth-value, as in the present paper, we can also say that the judgements are different.

[Comments on Sinn and Bedeutung]¹

[This piece was probably written in late 1891/early 1892,² and certainly before 1895, when Frege published a critique of a book by Schröder.³ A draft of the latter formed the first part (now lost) of a bundle of papers of which the second part was the present piece, published posthumously in 1969, and given its title by the editors.⁴ In 'Über Sinn und Bedeutung',⁵ to which the present piece can be regarded as a sequel, Frege only discussed the *Sinn* and *Bedeutung* of proper names and sentences (the latter seen as themselves proper names – names of the True or the False); and in the early years of Frege scholarship (prior to 1969), there was controversy over whether Frege intended to extend the distinction to concept words and other functional expressions.⁶ This piece makes Frege's position quite clear, and throws light on his understanding of concepts.⁷]

¹8 In an article ('Über Sinn und Bedeutung') I distinguished between sense and *Bedeutung* in the first instance only for the case of proper names (or, if one prefers, singular terms). The same distinction can also be drawn for concept words. Now it is easy to become unclear about this by confounding the division into concepts and objects with the distinction between sense and *Bedeutung*, so that we run together sense and concept on the one hand and *Bedeutung* and object on the

¹ Translated by Peter Long and Roger White (*PW*, pp. 118–25; from *NS* pp. 128–36; page numbers from the latter in the margin).

² Cf. fn. C below.

³ Frege, 'A Critical Elucidation of some Points in E. Schröder, *Vorlesungen über die Algebra der Logik [Lectures on the Algebra of Logic]*', in *CP*, pp. 210–28.

⁴ Frege, *Nachgelassene Schriften*, ed. H. Hermes, F. Kambartel and F. Kaulbach (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1969), pp. 128–36. (The book was translated into English as *PW*, published in 1979.)

⁵ This was announced as forthcoming in *FC* in 1891, and published in early 1892, and hence was presumably written in 1890–1.

⁶ Both Marshall (1953, 1956) and Grossmann (1961), for example, denied that Frege applied the distinction to functional expressions; Dummett (1955) and Jackson (1962) suggested that it did apply.

⁷ See also 'Letter to Husserl, 24.5.1891' (itself not published until 1976, in *WB*), pp. 149–50 above; II, pp. 294–6 below.

other. To every concept word or proper name, there corresponds as a rule a sense and a *Bedeutung*, as I use these words. Of course in fiction words only have a sense, but in science and wherever we are concerned about truth, we are not prepared to rest content with the sense, we also attach a *Bedeutung* to proper names and concept words; and if through some oversight, say, we fail to do this, then we are making a mistake that can easily vitiate our thinking. The *Bedeutung* of a proper name is the object it designates or names. A concept word stands for [bedeutet]⁸ a concept, if the word is used as is appropriate for logic. I may clarify this by drawing attention to a fact that seems to weigh heavily on the side of extensionalist as against intensionalist logicians: namely, that in any sentence we can substitute *salva veritate* one concept word for another if they have the same extension, so that it is also the case that in relation to inference, and where the laws of logic are concerned, concepts differ only in so far as their extensions are different. The fundamental logical relation is that of an object's falling under a concept: all relations between concepts can be reduced to this. If an object falls under a concept, it falls under all concepts with the same extension, and this implies what we said above. Therefore just as proper names can replace one another *salva veritate*, so too can concept words, if their extension is the same. Of course the thought will alter when such replacements are made, | but this is the sense of the sentence, not its *Bedeutung*.⁹ The *Bedeutung*, which is the truth-value, remains the same. For this reason we might easily come to propose the extension of a concept as the *Bedeutung* of a concept word; to do this, however, would be to overlook the fact that the extensions of concepts are objects and not concepts (cf. my essay 'Function and Concept'). Nevertheless there is a kernel of truth in this position. In order to bring it out more clearly, I need to advert to what I said in my work on 'Function and Concept'. On the view expressed there a concept is a function of one argument, whose value is always a truth-value.⁹ Here I am borrowing the term 'function' from Analysis and, whilst retaining what is essential to it, using it in a somewhat extended meaning [*Bedeutung*], a procedure for which the history of Analysis itself affords a precedent. The name of a function is accompanied by empty places (at least one) where the argument is to go; in Analysis this is usually indicated by the letter 'x'

⁸ Cf. my article 'Über Sinn und Bedeutung' [pp. 151–71 above].

⁹ Throughout PW, the translators render the verb 'bedeuten' as 'mean'. But in this piece, given Frege's view, as just stated, that the *Bedeutung* of a proper name is the object it designates [bezeichnet] or names [benennt], 'stand for' or 'refer to' seems the more appropriate translation. For discussion of the problems involved in translating '*Bedeutung*' and its cognates, and for the policy adopted in the present volume, see the Introduction, §4 above.

¹⁰ See p. 139 above.

which fills the empty places in question. But the argument is not to be counted as belonging to the function, and so the letter 'x' is not to be counted as belonging to the name of the function either. Consequently one can always speak of the name of a function as having empty places, since what fills them does not, strictly speaking, belong to them. Accordingly I call the function itself unsaturated, or in need of supplementation, because its name has first to be completed with the sign of an argument if we are to obtain a *Bedeutung* that is complete in itself. I call such a *Bedeutung* an object and, in this case, the value of the function for the argument that effects the supplementing or saturating. In the cases we first encounter the argument is itself an object, and it is to these that we shall mainly confine ourselves here. Now with a concept we have the special case that the value is always a truth-value. That is to say, if we complete the name of a concept with a proper name, we obtain a sentence whose sense is a thought; and this sentence has a truth-value as its *Bedeutung*. To acknowledge this *Bedeutung* as that of the True (as the True) is to judge that the object which is taken as the argument falls under the concept. What in the case of a function is called unsaturatedness, we may, in the case of a concept, call its predicative nature.¹⁰ This | comes out even in the cases in which we speak of a subject-concept ('All equilateral triangles are equiangular' means [das heißt] 'If anything is an equilateral triangle, then it is an equiangular triangle').¹⁰

Such being the essence of a concept, there is now a great obstacle in the way of expressing ourselves correctly and making ourselves understood. If I want to speak of a concept, language, with an almost irresistible force, compels me to use an inappropriate expression which obscures – I might almost say falsifies – the thought. One would assume, on the basis of its analogy with other expressions, that if I say 'the concept *equilateral triangle*' I am designating a concept, just as I am of course naming a planet if I say 'the planet Neptune'. But this is not the case; for we do not have anything with a predicative nature. Hence the *Bedeutung* of the expression 'the concept *equilateral triangle*' (if there is one in this case) is an object. We cannot avoid words like 'the concept', but where we use them we must always bear their inappropriateness in mind.^c From what we have said it follows that objects and concepts are

^b The words 'unsaturated' and 'predicative' seem more suited to the sense than the *Bedeutung*; still there must be something on the part of the *Bedeutung* which corresponds to this, and I know of no better words. Cf. Wundt's *Logik* [possibly a reference to Vol. I, p. 141 (Stuttgart, 1st edn. 1880); cf. NS, p. 129, editors' fn. 2].

^c I shall deal with this difficulty. [Frege is presumably referring to CO; see esp. pp. 184–5, 192–3 below. If this is right, then this would make late 1891/early 1892 the most likely date of composition of this piece, since CO was itself published in 1892.]

¹⁰ Cf. CO, p. 186 below.

fundamentally different and cannot stand in for one another. And the same goes for the corresponding words or signs. Proper names cannot really be used as predicates. Where they might seem to be, we find on looking more closely that the sense is such that they only form part of the predicate: concepts cannot stand in the same relations as objects. It would not be false, but impossible to think of them as doing so. Hence, the words ‘relation of a subject to a predicate’ designate two quite different relations, according as the subject is an object or is itself a concept. Therefore it would be best to banish the words ‘subject’ and ‘predicate’ from logic entirely, since they lead us again and again to confound two quite different relations: that of an object’s falling under a concept [subsumption] and that of one concept being subordinated to another [subordination]. The words ‘all’ and ‘some’, which go with the grammatical subject, belong in sense with the grammatical predicate, as we see if we go over to the negative (not all, *nonnulli*).¹¹ From this alone it immediately follows that the predicate in these cases is different from that which is asserted of an object. And in the same way the relation | of equality [*Gleichheit*], by which I understand complete coincidence, identity,¹² can only be thought of as holding for objects, not concepts. If we say ‘The *Bedeutung* of the word “conic section” is the same as that of the concept word “curve of the second degree”’ or ‘The concept *conic section* coincides with the concept *curve of the second degree*’, the words ‘*Bedeutung* of the concept word “conic section”’ are the name of an object, not of a concept; for their nature is not predicative, they are not unsaturated, they cannot be used with the indefinite article. The same goes for the words ‘the concept *conic section*’. But although the relation of equality can only be thought of as holding for objects, there is an analogous relation for concepts. Since this is a relation between concepts I call it a second-level relation, whereas the former relation I call a first-level relation. We say that an object *a* is equal to an object *b* (in the sense of completely coinciding with it) if *a* falls under every concept under which *b* falls, and conversely.¹³ We obtain something corresponding to this for concepts if we switch the roles of concept and object. We could then say that the relation we had in mind

¹¹ Compare e.g. ‘Frege is a philosopher’ (‘The object Frege falls under the concept *philosopher*’) and ‘All logicians are philosophers’ (‘The concept *logician* is subordinate to the concept *philosopher*’). The negation of the former is ‘Frege is not a philosopher’, but the negation of the latter is not ‘All logicians are not philosophers’ (‘The concept *logician* is subordinate to the concept *non-philosopher*’), but ‘Not all logicians are philosophers’ (‘The concept *logician* is not subordinate to the concept *philosopher*’); which shows that ‘all’ and ‘not all’ ‘belong in sense with the grammatical predicate’. Cf. CO, p. 187 below. (Cf. NS, p. 130, editors’ fn. 2.)

¹² Cf. p. 151 above, fn. A.

¹³ Frege is again appealing here to the Leibnizian principle that he took as his definition of identity in *GL*, §65 (see p. 112 above). Cf. p. 158 above.

above holds between the concept Φ and the concept X , if every object that falls under Φ also falls under X , and conversely. Of course in saying this we have again been unable to avoid using the expressions ‘the concept Φ ’, ‘the concept X ’, which again obscures the real sense. So for the reader who is not frightened of the *Begriffsschrift* I will add the following: the unsaturatedness of a concept (of first level) is represented in the *Begriffsschrift* by leaving at least one empty place in its designation where the name of the object which we are saying falls under the concept is to go. This place or places always has to be filled in some way or other. Besides being filled by a proper name it can also be filled by a sign which only indicates an object. We can see from this that the sign of equality, or one analogous to it, can never be flanked by the designation of a concept alone, but in addition to the concept an object must also be designated or indicated as well. Even if we only indicate concepts schematically by a function-letter, we must see to it that we give expression to their unsaturatedness by an accompanying empty place as in $\Phi()$ and $X()$. In other words, we may only use the letters (Φ , X), which are meant to indicate or designate concepts, as function-letters, i.e. in such a way that they are accompanied by a place for the argument (the space between the following brackets). This being so, we may not write $\Phi = X$, because here the letters Φ and X do not occur as function-letters. But nor may we | write $\Phi() = X()$, because the argument-places have to be filled. But when they are filled, it is not the functions (concepts) themselves that are put equal to one another: in addition to the function-letter there will be something else on either side of the equality sign, something not belonging to the function.

These letters cannot be replaced by letters that are not used as function-letters: there must always be an argument-place to receive the ‘ α ’. The idea might occur to one simply to write $\Phi = X$. This may seem all right so long as we are indicating concepts schematically, but a mode of designation that is really adequate must provide for all cases. Let us take an example which I have already used in my paper on ‘Function and Concept’.¹⁴

For every argument the function $x^2 = 1$ has the same (truth-)value as the function $(x + 1)^2 = 2(x + 1)$; i.e. every object falling under the concept *less by 1 than a number whose square is equal to its double* falls under the concept *square root of 1*, and conversely. If we expressed this thought in the way that we gave above,¹⁵ we should have

¹⁴ See pp. 138–9 above. Early work on the original manuscript, now lost, suggested that Frege may have intended to delete or bracket this paragraph, which does contain some repetition; cf. NS, p. 132, fn. 1.

¹⁵ Frege may have explained the notation used in the following formula in the lost first part of the bundle of papers of which this piece formed the second part (cf. NS, p. 132, editors’ fn. 3).

$$(\alpha^2 = 1) \circlearrowleft ((\alpha + 1)^2 = 2(\alpha + 1))$$

What we have here is that second-level relation which corresponds to, but should not be confused with, equality (complete coincidence) between objects. If we write it

$$\neg \underline{\alpha} \quad (\alpha^2 = 1) = ((\alpha + 1)^2 = 2(\alpha + 1)),$$

we have expressed what is essentially the same thought, construed as an equation between values of functions that holds generally. We have here the same second-level relation; we have in addition the sign of equality, but this does not suffice on its own to designate this relation: it has to be used in combination with the sign for generality: in the first line we have a general statement but not an equation. In

$$\dot{\epsilon}(\epsilon^2 = 1) = \dot{\alpha}((\alpha + 1)^2 = 2(\alpha + 1))$$

we do have an equation, but not between concepts (which is impossible) but between objects, namely extensions of concepts.¹⁶

Now we have seen that the relation of equality between objects cannot be conceived as holding between concepts too, but that there is a corresponding relation for concepts. It follows that the word ‘the same’ that is used to designate the former relation between objects cannot properly be used to designate the latter relation as well. If we try to use it to do this, the only recourse we really have is to say ‘the concept Φ is the same as | the concept X ’ and in saying this we have of course named a relation between objects,^D where what is intended is a relation between concepts. We have the same case if we say ‘the *Bedeutung* of the concept word A is the same as that of the concept word B ’. Indeed we should really outlaw the expression ‘the *Bedeutung* of the concept word A ’, because the definite article before ‘*Bedeutung*’ points to an object and belies the predicative nature of a concept. It would be better to confine ourselves to saying ‘what the concept word A stands for [*bedeutet*]’, for this at any rate is to be used predicatively: ‘Jesus is, what the concept word “man” stands for [*bedeutet*] in the sense of ‘Jesus is a man’.

Now if we bear all this in mind, we shall be well able to assert ‘what two concept words stand for [*bedeuten*] is the same if and only if the extensions of the corresponding concepts coincide’ without being led astray by the improper use of the word ‘the same’. And with this statement we have, I believe, made an important concession to the extensionalist logicians. They are right when they show by their preference for the extension, as against the intension, of a concept that they

¹⁶ These objects have the names ‘the concept Φ ’ and ‘the concept X ’.

^D For an explanation of Frege’s notation in the last two formulae, see Appendix 2 below.

regard the *Bedeutung* and not the sense of the words as the essential thing for logic. The intensionalist logicians are only too happy not to go beyond the sense; for what they call the intension, if it is not an idea, is nothing other than the sense. They forget that logic is not concerned with how thoughts, regardless of truth-value, follow from thoughts, that the step from thought to truth-value – more generally, the step from sense to *Bedeutung* – has to be taken. They forget that the laws of logic are first and foremost laws in the realm of *Bedeutungen* and only relate indirectly to sense. If it is a question of the truth of something – and truth is the goal of logic – we also have to inquire after *Bedeutungen*; we have to throw aside proper names that do not designate or name an object, though they may have a sense; we have to throw aside concept words that do not have a *Bedeutung*. These are not such as, say, contain a contradiction – for there is nothing at all wrong in a concept’s being empty – but such as have vague boundaries. It must be determinate for every object whether it falls under a concept or not; a concept word which does not meet this requirement on its *Bedeutung* is *bedeutungslos*. E.g. the word ‘μῆλον’ (Homer, *Odyssey* X, 305) belongs to this class, although it is true that certain marks are supplied.¹⁷ For this reason the context cited need not lack a sense, any more than other contexts in which the name ‘Nausicaa’,¹⁸ which probably does not stand for [*bedeutet*] or name anything, occurs. But it behaves as if it names a girl, and it is thus assured of a sense. And for fiction the sense is enough. | The thought, though it is devoid of *Bedeutung*, of truth-value, is enough, but not for science.

In my *Grundlagen* and the paper ‘On Formal Theories of Arithmetic’¹⁹ I showed that for certain proofs it is far from being a matter of indifference whether a combination of signs – e.g. $\sqrt{-1}$ – has a *Bedeutung*^E or not, that, on the contrary, the whole cogency of the proof stands or falls with this. The *Bedeutung* is thus shown at every point to be the essential thing for science. Therefore even if we concede to the intensionalist logicians that it is the concept as opposed to the extension that is the fundamental thing, this does not mean that it is to be taken

^E It is true that I had not then settled upon my present use of the words ‘sense’ and ‘Bedeutung’, so that sometimes I said ‘sense’ where I should now say ‘Bedeutung’. [Cf. p. 150 above.]

¹⁷ In Homer’s epic, ‘μῆλον’ (‘môly’) is the name of a magic plant which Hermes gave Odysseus to protect him from the goddess Circe’s potions. It is described as having a black root and a milk-white flower: these are the ‘marks’ (*Merkmale*) of which Frege speaks. For the notion of a ‘mark’, see *GL*, §53 (pp. 102–3 above), and *CO*, pp. 189–90 below.

¹⁸ ‘Nausicaa’ was the name, in Homer’s epic, of the beautiful daughter of the Phaiacian king Alcinous who brought Odysseus to her father’s house after a meeting arranged by Athena (*Odyssey* VI).

¹⁹ *FTA*, in *CP*, pp. 112–21.

as the sense of a concept word: it is its *Bedeutung*, and the extensionalist logicians come closer to the truth in so far as they are presenting in the extension – a *Bedeutung* as the essential thing. Though this *Bedeutung* is certainly not the concept itself, it is still very closely connected with it.

Husserl takes Schröder²⁰ to task for the unclarity in his discussion of the words '*unsinnig*' [without sense], '*einsinnig*' [having one sense], and '*mehrsinnig*' [having more than one sense], '*undeutig*' [without meaning], '*eindeutig*' [having one meaning], '*mehrdeutig*' [having more than one meaning] (pp. 48ff. and 69),²¹ and unclarity indeed there is, but even the distinctions Husserl draws are inadequate. It was hardly to be expected that Schröder's use of the particles '*sinnig*' and '*deutig*' would not differ from my own; still less can I take issue with him over this, since when his work appeared nothing had been published by me in this connection. For him this distinction is connected with that between common names and proper names, and the unclarity springs from a faulty conception of the distinction between concept and object. According to him there is nothing amiss with common names that are *mehrdeutig*, they are this when | more than one object falls under the corresponding concept.^F On this view it would be possible for a common name to be *undeutig* too, like 'round square', without its being defective. Schröder, however, calls it *unsinnig* as well and is thus untrue to his own way of speaking; for according to this the 'round square' would have to be called *einsinnig*, and Husserl was right when he called it a univocal common name; for 'univocal' and 'equivocal' correspond to Schröder's

^F If, as Husserl says in the first footnote to p. 252, a distributive name is one 'whose *Bedeutung* is such that it designates any one of a plurality of things', then a concept word (common name) is at any rate not a distributive name. [The original editors note that it is not entirely clear where this footnote was intended to go; NS, p. 135, fn. 2.]

²⁰ The reference is to Husserl's review of Schröder's *Vorlesungen über die Algebra der Logik (Etwakte Logik)* I (Leipzig, 1890), which appeared in the *Göttingischen gelehrte Anzeigen* in April 1891, pp. 243–78. It is one of the pieces Husserl sent to Frege that occasioned their first correspondence (see p. 149 above). For discussion of the relationship between Frege, Husserl and Schröder here, see Simons, 1992.

²¹ In the place referred to by Frege Schröder fixes on the adjectives ending in '*deutig*' as terms for the sizes of extensions of concepts. Schröder speaks generally of names and calls proper names '*ein-deutig*', common names like 'my hand' '*zweideutig*' [having two meanings], common names in general '*mehrdeutig*' or '*vieldeutig*' [having many meanings] and names like '*nōthing*' or 'round square' '*undeutig*'. The corresponding formations with '*sinnig*' are employed by Schröder to distinguish terms whose use is precisely fixed ('*unsinnig*' or 'univocal'), from terms with multiple meanings ('*doppelsinnig*' [having a double sense], '*mehrsinnig*' or 'equivocal') and from formations without sense ('*unsinnig*'; 'round square' in Schröder's example). With Husserl, Frege chiefly criticizes Schröder for calling a name like 'round square' '*undeutig*' when for this label to apply the name is merely already presupposed as being significant as such, so that it cannot at the same time be designated as '*unsinnig*'. [Translation of original editors' footnote (NS, p. 134, fn. 3).]

'*einsinnig*' and '*mehrsinnig*'. Husserl says (p. 250): 'Obviously he confuses two quite different questions here, namely (1) whether a name has a *Bedeutung* (a '*Sinn*'); and (2) whether there does or does not exist an object corresponding to the name'. This distinction is inadequate. The word 'common name' leads to the mistaken assumption that a common name is related to objects in essentially the same way as is a proper name, the difference being only that the latter names just one thing whilst the former is usually applicable to more than one. But this is false, and that is why I prefer 'concept word' to 'common name'.²² A proper name must at least have a sense (as I use the word); otherwise it would be an empty sequence of sounds and it would be wrong to call it a name. But if it is to have a use in science we must require that it have a *Bedeutung* too, that it designates or names an object. Thus it is via a sense, and only via a sense, that a proper name is related to an object.²³

A concept word must have a sense too and if it is to have a use in science, a *Bedeutung*; but this consists neither of one object nor of a plurality of objects: it is a concept. Now in the case of a concept it can of course again be asked whether one object falls under it, or more than one or none. But this relates directly to the concept and nothing else. So a concept word can be absolutely impeccable, logically speaking, without there being an object to which it is related through its sense and *Bedeutung* (the concept itself). As we see, this relation to an object is more indirect and inessential, so that there seems little point in dividing concept words up according as no object falls under the corresponding concepts or one object or more than one. Logic must demand not only of proper names but of concept words as well that the step from | the word to the sense and from the sense to the *Bedeutung* be determinate beyond any doubt. Otherwise we should not be entitled to speak of a *Bedeutung* at all. Of course this holds for all signs and combinations of signs with the same function as proper names or concept words.

²² Cf. Frege's 'Letter to Husserl, 24.5.1891', pp. 149–50 above.

²³ Since Schröder and Husserl did not distinguish, in the way Frege did, between the *Sinn* and *Bedeutung* of an expression, we have thought it best in this paragraph to preserve the actual German where these terms or (more commonly) their cognates with '*sinnig*' and '*deutig*' occur in quotation from these authors, or where Frege himself uses the latter in alluding to their views. We have given what help we could to the reader by providing renderings in square brackets . . . (Trs.) [Frege's own use of 'Bedeutung' also remains untranslated.]