

A TRANSLATION OF FREGE'S *UEBER SINN UND BEDEUTUNG*

Introductory Note

THE LOGICAL and mathematical writings of Gottlob Frege are gradually emerging from undeserved neglect. After a lapse of half a century, it is becoming generally recognized that his views on topics of fundamental importance in the foundations of mathematics and the philosophy of symbolism deserve very serious attention. And many feel that where Frege's judgment differs from the more generally received doctrine he is more likely to be right than his opponents. This process of revaluation would be hastened if Frege's writings were more generally accessible.

It has therefore seemed worthwhile to translate his famous paper on "Sinn und Bedeutung," published in 1892 in the *Zeitschrift für Philosophie und philosophische Kritik* (vol. 100, pp. 25-50).

The point of central interest is Frege's distinction between sense (*Sinn*) and designation or denotation or, as I have chosen to call it, reference (*Bedeutung*). This corresponds, in some measure, to a distinction which other philosophers have made between *connotation* and *denotation*, or *intension* and *extension* (or even *description* and *acquaintance*). But Frege's distinction is not to be identified with any of these. I doubt that many philosophers would accept Frege's demonstration that the referent of a declarative sentence is either *the true* or *the false*; or that many will sympathize with his dogged persistence in examining the relevance of his distinction to the manifold types of subordinate clauses which may be exemplified in complex sentences. But if his doctrines occasionally seem implausible, they always deserve detailed refutation; and the effort of following his argument is rewarded by flashes of penetrating insight.

In trying to prepare a *literal* translation which will not sound foreign, one runs into obvious difficulties. In the present instance, these are aggravated by the novelty of Frege's ideas and the consequent lack of a settled terminology for their expression. (Thus some may object to my choice of "refer to" for *bedeuten* and "referent" for *Bedeutung*. But "denote" is misleading, "designatum" clumsy, and "nominatum"—Carnap's suggestion—too new for general acceptance.) The trans-