

## Theory of Meaning in the *Begriffsschrift* (1879) – Two Misconceptions

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There is a long tradition in Frege-scholarship of approaching Frege's writings as if they were in one respect like the famous Fregean senses -- cognitively transparent. Little or no historical-exegetical work is believed to be required to understand, and correctly assess, the philosophical doctrines and arguments in Frege. In this paper, I seek to establish that looking at the work of Frege's predecessors -- the work of Frege's teacher Hermann Lotze (1817-1881), in particular -- is not just in some sense "instructive" or "illuminating," but a precondition for a correct understanding of Frege's views.

The paper offers a new account of Frege's *Begriffsschrift*-philosophy, which points to a new view of Frege's philosophical development. It is widely believed that the following two claims are true of the *Begriffsschrift*:

(I) In the *Begriffsschrift* Frege holds a Russellian view of propositions.

(II) In the *Begriffsschrift* Frege operates with a distinction that is roughly equivalent to the later distinction between sense (*Sinn*) and reference (*Bedeutung*).

I contend that the early sections of the *Begriffsschrift* should be interpreted against the background of Lotze's philosophy; and when they are so interpreted, the motivation for (I) and (II) disappears. Contrary to (I), the Frege of the *Begriffsschrift* is not a Russellian, but thoroughly Lotzean about propositions (in the sense that he accepts Lotze's doctrine, according to which judging involves "nothing but combinations of ideas"). And contrary to (II), there is nothing like the (semantic) distinction between sense and reference in the *Begriffsschrift*. There is only a distinction that closely resembles Frege's later (metaphysical) distinction between *sense* and *idea* (*Vorstellung*).