

Frege's Third Realm and the Structure of Thought

KURT WISCHIN

But if someone says, “How am I to know what he means —I see only his signs?”, then I say, “how is *he* to know what he means, he too has only his signs?”

Ludwig Wittgenstein

§1. Introducción

IT IS FREQUENTLY ASSUMED THAT FREGE'S INSISTENCE on a third realm between the things of the external world and the imagination of individual humans (Frege 1918/1967, p. 69/353) or between physics and psychology (Frápolti 2023) makes him a transcendent Platonist. At first sight, it is hard to understand *a posteriori* why mainstream analytic philosophy should have gone so wide astray when trying to digest Frege's philosophy of logic and language. For instance, it should have been easy to see that Frege cannot be said to be a metaphysical or transcendent Platonist in any meaningful way. In each case, he starts from a judgement that constitutes, together with other judgements, our knowledge of at least a section of the domain of things and relations. All our judgements depend on other judgements via inferential relations, as far as they are interesting from a logical point of view. However, the history of thought is a meander, and, as Wittgenstein remarked, the errors induced by our urge to misunderstand are not stupid mistakes¹.

There are several aspects of Frege's doctrine that make readers assume that he was a metaphysical realist about logical entities, his explicit protests to the contrary notwithstanding. Several historical circumstances may have provided the motives for reading these aspects in such a way. In this brief article, I shall draw attention to several well-known aspects of Frege's doctrine, which keep

¹ *PI* § 340: “One cannot guess how a word functions. One has to *look* at its application and learn from that. But the difficulty is to remove the prejudice which stands in the way of doing so. It is not a *stupid* prejudice”.

receiving a distorted reading despite a wealth of insightful discussion, at least since the early 1980s. A fresh look at some of the main points of past disputes hopefully helps to undermine some of these persistent assumptions distorting Frege's legacy.

§ 1. Frege's reception and its problems in analytic philosophy

The first and second parts of this writing are just an assemblage of arguments brought forward in the past about the topic that concerns us here, and I do not claim any originality. Many of the insights that guide my discussion here were made by Hans Sluga² more than forty years ago when he wrote his book *Gottlob Frege*. He was making a solid case against reading Frege exclusively by the lights of the analytic philosophy which arose in the 20th Century, not in a small part out of his philosophy of logic and language. Frege's legacy must be apprehended, he argued, as a complete philosophy having its roots in the 19th Century Back-to-Kant-Movement. That vision includes denying that Frege's semantic outlook was essentially representationalist, and labelling him a platonic realist would be misguided. One argument —and probably the best-sustained one— that Sluga forwarded against Frege's supposed Platonism consisted in showing that the context principle, Frege's way of adhering to Kant's principle of "judgements first", lay at the very foundations of Frege's doctrine before and after 1891. After resisting the idea for almost two dozen years, Dummett reversed his stance in 1993, though without acknowledging — as far as I know— that Sluga had been right all along. But as the following (perhaps ambiguous) passage by Linnebo shows, Dummett's reversal did not do much to change the point of view the "orthodox analytic philosophy" had developed of that aspect of Frege's doctrine, nor did the general perception of Frege change much since then. One important motive for revisiting —after so many years— the thoughts of Sluga, Ricketts, Haaparanta, and many others in this brief writing hence is the persistence with which Frege still seems to be classified quite naturally as a Platonist.

On the other hand, Brandom (1986) rightly complains that Sluga did not present a plausible non-representationalist explication in his book for the passages in Frege's work that suggest a representationalist standpoint. He just ignored them. Also, Gottfried Gabriel, who generally shows sympathy for Sluga's reading of Frege, finds that his argument has several lagunas that need

² Earlier accounts of how Frege's conception of logic differed from today's dominant one can be found in Burton Dreben's work in the early 1960s and, for example, in Jean van Heijenoort's "Logic as Calculus and Logic as Language", *Synthese* 17, 1967, pp. 324-330. Cf. Goldfarb (2010, p. 63, n. 1).

to be filled in and that some of his claims in the book are unwarranted. Much has been written since then about controversial issues like these. My paper relies mainly on previous observations filling in lacunae that Sluga might have left open, drawing on Tom Rickett's article "Objectivity and Objecthood: Frege's Metaphysics of Judgment" (1986) and other authors whose efforts to correct the lopsided reception of Frege are compiled in Haaparanta/Hintikka (1986), Reck (2002) and Potter/Ricketts (2010), but also the views of Frege developed throughout their works by Robert Brandom and María José Frápolli, among several other pragmatically minded philosophers. I hope the resulting synopsis of some things that others have said before may allow us to chisel away a bit more of the view of "mainstream analytic philosophy". It may also provide a necessary reminder that the "Platonism–accusation" against Frege oversimplifies and misinterprets a much more sophisticated view he held of objects, abstract and otherwise. We shall also be reminded that the later Wittgenstein reconnected with some fundamental features of Frege's philosophical outlook after rejecting some of the positions he put forward in the *Tractatus*. Some of those features are also at odds with the goals of orthodox analytic philosophy — to the dismay of Russell— for instance, the view that a global semantic theory for natural language is a hopeless enterprise.

The understanding of "Platonism" in the realm of logic and mathematics in the analytic philosophy of our days tends to blur some fundamental assumptions that underlie Frege's doctrine. To make them accessible to reflection, in this paper, I take "Platonism" to mean that entities such as thoughts or numbers and logical constants are not just objective in the sense that we can make true statements about them that don't depend on a particular speaker's attitudes, but that they are real (as Frege insists they are not) or exist in a metaphysical sense, independently of human judgements or conceptualisation. Following, for example, Gottfried Gabriel (2002, p. 41), we might call the view I intend to discredit here "transcendent Platonism", while I have no problem with supposing that Frege could be seen as a "transcendental Platonist". That is, the view that thoughts are objective as our private ideas are not, but cannot be perceived by the senses, a feature they share with the subjective ideas of individuals.

Under the heading "Platonism in the Philosophy of Mathematics", Øystein Linnebo describes the rough outline of what "Platonism" means in that context.:

The most important argument for the existence of abstract mathematical objects derives from Gottlob Frege and goes as follows (Frege 1953). The language of mathematics purports to refer to and quantify over abstract mathematical objects. And a great number

of mathematical theorems are true. But a sentence cannot be true unless its sub-expressions succeed in doing what they purport to do. So there exist abstract mathematical objects that these expressions refer to and quantify over (Linnebo 2018).

Linnebo calls on Frege's *Foundations of Arithmetic* here and provides interesting definitions of mathematical Platonism by Dummett, Field, Gödel, Maddy, Parsons, Shapiro, Resnik and others. As stated there, all of them seem to have in common that, in their view, objectivity seems sufficient to claim existence, something Frege does not do. Maybe what Linnebo wants to say is correct, and he may be taking his use of "exist" here to be licensed by Frege's use of the "existential quantifier", like in $\sim(x)\sim f(x)$, to mean that at least one object falls under the concept f .³ But it can be taken as a description of Frege's view only if we ignore Frege's differentiated use of "exist" and in a way suggested, for example, by Quine.⁴

Quine classifies Frege as adherent to a Platonic doctrine of realism in the mediaeval sense:

Realism, as the word is used in connection with the mediaeval controversy over universals, is the Platonic doctrine that universals or abstract entities have being independently of the mind; the mind may discover them but cannot create them. *Logicism*, represented by Frege, Russell, Whitehead, Church, and Carnap, condones the use of bound variables to refer to abstract entities known and unknown, specifiable and unspecifiable, indiscriminately.

Conceptualism holds that there are universals but they are mind-made (Quine 1953, p. 14).

If Quine's description is right, he should have left Frege out of it. As contrasted against *Conceptualism*, Frege was neither a conceptualist nor a realist. To "have being" is not something Frege attributes to anything. He ridiculed the divinisation of the copula in his epilogue to the dialogue with Pünjer about existence (Frege 1983, p. 71)⁵. His anti-psychologism prevented, at the same time, him from being classified in the latter group. While for Frege existence

³ However, if we follow the suggestions of Danielle Macbeth (2005) it is in principle a questionable attitude to read Frege's symbolic language as though it were a quantificational logic as it is understood throughout the 20th Century and in our days.

⁴ Quine himself ceded "exist" to his punching bag Wyman. For a discussion of Frege's view of "exist" and the short history discussing the ambiguity of "is" see, for example, Haaparanta (1986a, 1986b, 2012), Hintikka (1986) or Rami (2021).

⁵ A detailed discussion of Frege's concept of existence, as may be obtained from the dialogue with Pünjer I just mentioned, may be found in Haaparanta (1986). Some of my arguments in this paper rely on ideas developed by her in that article.

was a second-order predicate and could not be meaningfully predicated of any object, for Quine the question of existence was tied up with the connotations of the particular name under consideration: for Pegasus to exist, he must be a thing in space-time that can cause air to carry it, while the square root of two has no such connotation, implying perhaps that Frege, therefore, should have conceded its existence beyond mere objectivity. But Quine, being sceptical about meanings, naturally also rejected Frege's view of senses and meanings without further ado (Cf. Quine 1953, p. 153). He has no patience for a "third realm", which is more reminiscent of Plato's original ideas than the descriptions he or Linnebo gave.

If one is content with saying that Frege was a Platonist as described by Linnebo or Quine in the passages I quoted but leaving out the question of existence. Furthermore, just saying that thoughts, numbers and existence do not depend on what any individual thinker thinks about these concepts; that is, considering Frege a transcendental Platonist, as Gottfried Gabriel (2002) suggests. In that case, the description may be fitting. I don't think there is any problem with describing Frege's position in such a way. However, I believe that describing Frege as a *transcendent* Platonist, to rely once more on Gabriel, is misleading and a step in a direction that tends to obscure Frege's philosophy of logic. My main interest here is to become clear about that aspect of the discussion.

As is widely known, Frege indeed does claim explicitly that a third realm must be recognised:

So the result seems to be: thoughts are neither things in the external world nor representations.

A third realm must be recognised. Anything belonging to this realm has it in common with representations that it cannot be perceived by the senses, but has it in common with things that it does not need an owner so as to belong to the contents of his consciousness.

Frege added a footnote at the end of the paragraph:

A person sees a thing, has an idea, grasps or thinks a thought. When he grasps or thinks a thought he does not create it but only comes to stand in a certain relation to what is already there —a different relation from seeing a thing or having an idea (Frege 1918/1986, p. 69; translation modified).⁶

⁶ Frege contrasts here things of the external world with *Vorstellungen*, translated in Frege (1918/1967) as "ideas". Geach/Stoothoff also translate "...der schon vorher bestand..." as "what already existed". I find both translations problematic.

That may sound as though, in fact, Frege held thoughts to be part of a metaphysical reality. To see why such a reading would involve several misunderstandings and why it is unfortunate from a philosophical standpoint, one must approach Frege as more than a genial while defective forebear of the later analytic philosophy.

I believe that Frege would have fully agreed with *Philosophical Investigation* § 504 I have used as the motto for this writing. As far as I know, nobody has accused the later Wittgenstein of being a metaphysical Platonist. Frege and Wittgenstein agree on the objectivity of thought in the sense just expressed. Moreover, both reject a notion of meaning understood as the expression of private certainties. That understanding is one key element we need to consider when trying to see why it is misguided to describe Frege as a metaphysical Platonist. Nevertheless, it will be convenient to spell things out a bit more.

What is wrong with what I call here the approach of mainstream analytic philosophy to Frege's philosophy of logic and language, and why it is unfortunate from a philosophical standpoint, has been variously described from different points of view. That is as it must be since it is not due to one single or easy-to-identify misreading or misinterpretation. Not only have, for example, Dummett's lifelong studies of Frege produced extremely valuable insights, but the discussion of Frege within the framework of assumption similar to his in various aspects is without any doubt worthwhile. The view of mainstream analytic philosophy certainly has not obtained that status out of the blue. While I learned a lot about Frege by reading Dummett and other like-minded philosophers, I shall be silent about their many merits and examine only some of the problems that arise because of their attitude towards Frege and some of their basic but unwarranted assumptions.

One main problem with mainstream analytic philosophers' reading of Frege is that they project their views of logic and philosophy of language back into Frege instead of trying to understand him taking into account the philosophical background from which his ideas sprang. Brandom (1986) sees that as an important point in a chapter of Haaparanta's and Hintikka's compilation *Frege Synthesized*, commenting among other works on Sluga's (1980) book *Gottlob Frege*:

[Sluga's] central aim is to reread Frege's work in the light of that of his precursors and contemporaries, *rather than by reference to his successors in the analytic tradition, as has been traditional*. Although Frege's unprecedented innovations in symbolic logic have made it natural to think of him exclusively in the role of the founder of a tradition —as a man without a past —Sluga argues that we ignore at our peril his intellectual climate and the influences which conditioned various aspects of his technical concepts and of the

explanatory tasks he set for them (Brandom 1986, p. 269, my emphasis).

I shall now turn to the account Thomas Ricketts (1986) offers of why mainstream analytic philosophy failed to appreciate Frege's logic and language philosophy fully. He suggests in "Objectivity and Objecthood" (1986) that Frege's insistence in *Foundations of Arithmetic*, when viewed from the perspective of later Analytic Philosophy, indeed is tempting to be read thus:

As commonly understood, this principle represents little more than Frege's insistence on the distinction between mind-independent objects and mind-dependent states, and so expresses his rejection of subjective idealism. Such an ontological construal of the objective-subjective distinction in its turn supports a very common reading of Frege according to which he is the archetypical metaphysical platonist (Ricketts 1986, p. 65).

Ricketts reminds us that, while Frege presented the technical tools for his program of logicism with the *Begriffsschrift* of 1879, the philosophical background was laid out in 1884 with the *Foundations of Arithmetic*. Famously, he states there are three basic principles that shall guide his reflections:

There must be a sharp separation of the psychological from the logical, the subjective from the objective;
 The meaning of a word must be asked for in the context of a proposition, not in isolation;
 The distinction between concept and object must be kept in mind (Frege 1884/1997, p. X/ 90).

Much of the misreading of Frege that has become standard practice in analytic philosophy has started with downplaying the importance of these principles or misjudging their role in Frege's view of logic and language throughout his intellectual life.

Ricketts convincingly argues that attributing the (Platonistic) position to Frege that judgements bridge the gap between language and reality completely fails to understand his conception of judgments. As Ricketts observes, Frege argues for the objectivity of thoughts exclusively because the ability to agree or disagree on judgements is needed but with no hint of any ontological underpinning. We can agree and disagree because we express our thoughts or judgements in a language that everybody dominating the language understands. The thought is precisely as objective as the language used to express it.

On the Platonistic understanding, the first of Frege's principles from *Foundations*, the objectivity-subjectivity distinction, is misread as the metaphysical foundation of formal semantics and, since that attempt fails by the

lights of contemporary analytic philosophy, as an inadequate account of how language hooks on to reality (Cf. Ricketts 1986, p. 66). Ricketts argues against that view that, for Frege, ontological notions are supervenient to logical ones based on the fundamental status of judgements. Since there *is* no antecedent reality as a Platonist reading would suppose, the chasm between thought and reality is rendered unintelligible by Frege's approach.

Leila Haaparanta (1986) reminds us in her chapter entitled "Frege on Existence", following van Heijenoort and Hintikka, that Frege held semantics to be ineffable. Though she doesn't explicitly say so, this sits badly with the view that Frege had at least outlined the fundamental characteristics of a semantic theory for natural language, for instance, in "On Sense and Meaning". Alberto Coffa, for example, asserts:

The logical" – it would be a serious error to misunderstand what Frege meant by this recurring expression in his early writings. What Frege and Russell called "logical", what Husserl called a "logical" investigation, what Meinong called "*Gegenstandstheorien*," and what Wittgenstein termed a "logico-philosophical" observation are close relatives; they should not be confused with what is now called logic, after formalism and set theory have come to dominate the field. Their "logic" was our semantics, a doctrine of content, its nature and structure, and not merely of its "formal" fragment (Coffa 1991, p. 64).

For example, much of what Coffa claims is right and echoed in Goldfarb's account, which I shall summarise in a moment, except that it would seem that he claims that Frege saw his logic as a semantic theory ruling all of natural language, where it not for its imperfection. However, Frege made no such claim and had no such intentions. Haaparanta, among others, is right in asserting that Frege held semantics to be impossible.

Warren Goldfarb describes in his article "Frege's conception of logic" what he sees as the most significant discrepancy between Frege and contemporary logic. Ignoring that difference when discussing Frege —as Goldfarb accuses the followers of Tarski and Quine, as well as Dummett— might be seen as a temptation to read conceptions concerning the subject of logic currently in vogue back into Frege. Goldfarb sees three main areas where the conception of logic of Frege (Russell and Wittgenstein) differs from the contemporary view as manifested by Tarski and Quine:

1. The contrasting characteristics of the contemporary *formalist* and the Fregean *universalist* conception of logic have significant consequences for the philosophical outlook that should not be overlooked. Speaking first of the currently dominant view, Goldfarb explains:

On this *schematic conception* of logic, the formal language of central concern is that of logical schemata. Pure logic aims at ascertaining logical properties and logical relations of these formulas, and also at demonstrating general laws about the properties and relations. ... logic deals with logical forms, which schematise away the particular subject matter of sentences. Thus logic is tied to no particular subject matter because it deals with these 'empty' forms rather than with particular contents (Goldfarb 2010, pp. 66–67).

On Frege's *universalist conception* ... the concern of logic is the articulation and proof of logical laws, which are universal truths. Since they are universal, they are applicable to any subject matter, as application is carried out by instantiation. For Frege, the laws of logic are general, not in being about nothing in particular (about forms), but in using topic–universal vocabulary to state truths about everything (ibid., pp. 68).

Goldfarb goes on to say that, while these views may be superficially similar, they differ in philosophically important ways and “the universalist conception is an essential background to many of Frege's ontological views” (ibid, p. 69). The schematic conception is metalinguistic, and “thus logic concerns features of discourse. In contrast, on the universalist conception logic sits squarely at the object level, issuing laws that are simply statements about the world” (ibid., p. 69). Implying that one may not get the picture of Frege's philosophy of logic right while ignoring these differences.

2. A second difference that Goldfarb notes concerns the truth predicate:

Clearly, the schematic conception employs a truth predicate: the definitions of validity and logical consequence talk of the truth under all interpretations of schemata [Note 18: The truth predicate needed is a predicate of sentences. For Frege, it was not sentences but rather thoughts (senses of sentences) that were true or false]. ... On the universalist conception, in contrast, no truth predicate is needed either to frame the laws of logic or to apply them (ibid. p. 71–72).

Since Frege identifies the subject of logic not with the word “true” but rather to the assertoric force with which a sentence is uttered (Frege PW, pp. 251–252), “rubrics like ‘general laws of truth’ cannot serve to give a real characterisation of logic or a demarcation of the realm of the logical” (ibid. p. 74).

3. The fact, observed in the first point, that the universalist conception operates on the object level, while the schematic conception functions on the meta–level, has consequences for understanding the way Frege sees justification:

[Frege's] logic tells us when one claim is a ground for another, namely, when the

latter can be inferred, using logical laws, from the former. Explanation and justification are matters of giving grounds. ... Thus, the laws of logic are explicatory of explanation and justification; on this rests their claim to the honorific title 'logic' (ibid. p. 78).

In her book *The Priority of Propositions. A Pragmatist Philosophy of Logic* (2023), María José Frápolli similarly describes some differences between the Fregean philosophy of logic and language often overlooked by mainstream analytic philosophy but highlights other essential aspects.

One crucial point Frápolli has been insisting on for many years and which is again emphasised in her new book is as follows: in the discussion of Frege's philosophy of language, it has been maintained that the principle of composition is the dominant one, while the principle of context is seen to play a secondary role; that is, a bottom-up explication is offered of how the sense of a sentence is built up out of pre-established components, a view dubbed by Brandom as conceptual Platonism (Brandom 2000, p. 4). According to that explication, the sense of a sentence consists only of the senses of these components and the structure they form. However, for Frápolli, Frege's philosophy of language is based on the principle of propositional priority. The sense of a sentence and the senses of its components depend on the inferential role of propositional content and how it is analysed.

Frápolli sees Frege's (as well as Wittgenstein's) philosophy of logic in agreement with some principles guiding modern philosophy, such as what she calls the principles of propositional priority and superseding of grammar. I am quoting from a draft of her new book I was allowed to see:

In general, the role of logical terms makes obvious that logic can only do its job once propositional contents are available. Propositional contents are the logician's raw material. It is in this sense that contemporary logic is a logic of propositions, and not a logic of terms like Aristotelian and Medieval logics were, and also were the algebraic approaches developed at the end of the nineteenth century. (Frápolli 2023, pp. 30–31).

So while Frápolli sees Frege as agreeing with the modern philosophy of logic as having propositions as its raw material, she contrasts the dominant building block model mentioned above with the organic model described in Frápolli and Villanueva (2016). On the linguistic level, these two opposing models take the form of the principles of composition and context. According to Frápolli, it is mainly reading the principle of composition as the dominant one into Frege's philosophy of logic that invites viewing him as a metaphysical Platonist:

The text just quoted points to something even more basic that connects logic with

common sense: that having parts is not something that can be said of abstract entities. Abstract entities admit of analysis, but they can neither be broken down into nor built up out of pieces. They are not physical objects. Frege's *Logical Investigations* ... are rife with arguments and hints about the unstructured nature of propositions. It is an acceptable, and sometimes very useful, fiction to talk of abstract entities as if they were physical objects. But this methodological fiction should not make us lose sight of the fact that attributing parts to non-physical entities is a category mistake. A similar category mistake occurs when we ask about the realm in which abstract entities (numbers, propositions) *stand*, as realists (approvingly) and anti-realists (disapprovingly) usually do. Numbers and propositions are not anywhere; they have no spatio-temporal location. The 'domain of what is objective' ... or the 'third realm' ... that Frege reserves for them are not physical places, but rather the acknowledgement of their objectivity. This also hints at the specific status that sets them apart from physical objects and from private psychological impressions that can be modified at will. The confusion between what is objective in the conceptual sphere with those external objects that are represented by mental representations is the 'proton pseudon' (*the first lie*), Bolzano contended, of idealist philosophy This is also the *proton pseudon* of all empiricisms. The domain of what is objective is neither reducible to mental representations nor to physical configurations. Abstract entities are similar to psychological entities in that they cannot be perceived, and similar to physical objects in that they do not need a bearer, as Frege explains again and again (see, for instance, Frege, loc. cit.). Therefore, logic and semantics, whose subjects are concepts and propositions, are neither psychology nor physics.

To emphasise the difference between the building block and the organic models, Frápolli shows that the relation between language and thought differs for each model. A thought would be one and the same for Frege regardless of its expression in active or passive voice. However, the two sentences would express different thoughts for the building block model.

While Goldfarb sets Frege, Russell and young Wittgenstein as *universalists* against the modern *schematisist* conception, Frápolli distinguishes Frege's view about *logical truths* from Russell's and young Wittgenstein's by containing some key aspects that are also important for pragmatism. Logical truths are without content for the latter, while logical propositions codify principles of reasoning for Frege: "The explicitly stated purpose of the *Begriffsschrift* shows that Frege considers the role of logic to be that of signalling and testing transitions between propositional contents. These contents are the stuff on which logic performs its task" (Frápolli 2023).

In the next section, I shall talk a bit more about the alternative reading of Frege that Frápolli suggests in her new book. In the last part of this paper, I shall discuss the view of propositions having no components and if there are tensions in Frege's conception of propositions between characterising them earlier as inferential contents and later as thoughts.

§ 2. The Third Realm between Psychology and Physics

I shall now turn to some alternative accounts of Frege's philosophy of logic and language that harmonise better with his philosophical background. One aim is to show that his talk about a third realm does not entail metaphysical Platonism. Parts of these accounts have already been covered in the previous section while calling on the discussions contrasting Frege's and contemporary views on a variety of questions. Some of the following arguments may be seen as confirming different aspects of similar points brought forward in the first section.

To highlight Sluga's arguments for disassembling the analytic philosophy's Frege, I first let myself be loosely guided in my commentary by Brandom (1986, pp. 269–279):

1. Frege argues against a naturalised, psychologistic view of logic that was dominant in Germany after Hegel's death. He sometimes refers to it as psychologism. As Sluga sees it, Frege's over-arching objection to the naturalists is their failure appropriately to distinguish between the normative and ideal order of correct inference and justification on the one hand, and the descriptive and actual order of causation and empirical processes on the other. Their concomitant confusion of features of cognitive acts with features of the contents of those acts is merely the expression of this original sin (Brandom 1986, p. 271).
2. Frege's argument chimes in with Trendelenburg's "Back-to-Kant"-movement. One may agree, though, with Gabriel (2002, p. 40) that the evidence offered in Sluga's book for the influence of Lotze and other neo-Kantians on Frege is thin. Dummett (1976, 1981) even claims that all of this is "a remarkable piece of misapplied history", and Sluga's claim is unwarranted. Brandom and Gabriel think Sluga is right and that the missing evidence can be provided.
3. Sluga's most crucial argument, though, concerns the influence of Kant: He claims that Frege should not be thought of as a dogmatic realist about physical objects nor as a Platonist about abstract objects, as he almost universally has been thought of. He should be seen rather as a Kantian whose realistic remarks are to be interpreted as expressing that merely empirical realism which is one feature of transcendental idealism (p. 273). Frege's belief in the primacy of judgements over concepts is seen as clearly incompatible with Platonic realism.
4. Sluga is committed to showing that the context principle is present in Frege's philosophy even after splitting the notion of judgeable content into sense and meaning. A point Dummett (1995) conceded 13 years later. Brandom (p. 276) presents a detailed account of five reasons Sluga

gives for Frege's maintaining the context principle after 1891. One that matters for our present concern about Frege's Platonism is that, contrary to what is generally affirmed, his article "On Sense and Meaning" does not establish a relational sense indicating a correlation with an object. "Sluga understands *Bedeutung*' as a nonrelational semantic potential defined paradigmatically for sentences, in virtue of their role in inference" and not primarily for singular terms (p. 276–277). Here, Brandom finds Sluga's account defective since he fails to explain passages in Frege's work that do "have a relational notion of reference in play" (p. 277). Brandom (pp. 278–279) also complains that Sluga does not say in what form the context principle would have survived the separation of the notion of judgeable content in sense and meaning and suggests that it probably should be seen to apply only to sense.

5. Sluga takes Frege to follow Kant also in "refuting any atomistic attempt to construct concepts and judgements out of simple components⁷, and in particular to resist the empiricist sensationalist atomism of Hume" (p. 276). Brandom believes that Sluga's argument does not make Frege a transcendental idealist. While incompatible with a Kotarbinskian world of arranged objects, it does not prevent Frege from being a realist about abstract entities.

However, Sluga maintains nowhere in his book in so many words that Frege was a transcendental idealist.⁸ But he says that elements of Kantian idealism can be found in his philosophy⁹ and was heavily criticised for doing so. Despite all the criticism this assertion has received, I believe that the general idea is right, in any case, more so than the Platonism–accusation, if taken with the right amount of salt.

Kant's philosophy can be seen as an attempt to mediate between the ontological claims of realism and the epistemological claims of idealism. His resolution of the dispute consists in the thesis that knowledge is objective, but objective only for us, that the objective is not independent of reason. He thought that our classical modes of reasoning could thus be

⁷ I shall come back to that point in the last section of this writing.

⁸ Gottfried Gabriel, in an account sympathetic to Sluga's book, comments: "Agreeing with Sluga on these points does not imply accepting his bold assertion that Frege turns out to be a transcendental idealist" (Gabriel 2002, p. 39).

⁹ For example: "In opposing themselves to scientific naturalism the philosophers of the late nineteenth century were often in sympathy with some doctrines of the idealists. That is why idealist and rationalist elements can be found in Frege's writings" (Sluga 1980, pp. 14–15).

safeguarded without committing us to unwanted metaphysical conclusions. If Frege's theory of objectivity can be interpreted in this Kantian sense, we can credit him with an understanding of the shortcomings of metaphysical realism or Platonism while holding on to the belief in the objectivity of logic and mathematics. There is a sense in which that position can be called realism but its realism is not incompatible with idealism: it is itself a form of idealism (Sluga 1980, p. 107).

It is true, of course, that Frege's doctrine contains features that are incompatible with a strict version of Kantian idealism. Still, these mainly have to do with Frege's characteristic view of judgements in arithmetic as being analytic and necessary truths *because* they contain no element of intuition, as judgements in geometry do. For Kant, elements of intuition are no obstacle for a judgement to be a necessary truth. Sluga is well aware of these differences, and the right approach to his book, I believe, is to see its merit in the sharp rejection of taking from Frege only what is right by the lights of later Analytic Philosophy. That is a point well taken also by Brandom.

For Thomas Ricketts, what is all-important to Frege is the distinction between purely logical and intuitive reasoning:

Frege is particularly exercised by this [enthymatic] carelessness on account of his desire to maintain against Kant that pure intuition plays no role in mathematical reasoning. Frege speaks of "... chains of deductions with no link missing such that no step in it is taken which does not conform to some one of a small number of principles of inference recognised as purely logical," and goes on to complain: "To this day, scarcely one single proof has ever been conducted on these lines; the mathematician rests content if every transition to a fresh judgment is self-evidently correct without inquiring into the nature of this self-evidence, whether it is logical or intuitive" (Ricketts 1986, p. 74).

To avoid a Platonist reading of Frege's claim to the Third Realm, Ricketts proposes that

There is another philosophically more interesting and historically more apt construal of Frege's work, one which denies to ontological notions the independence and primacy they have on the platonist interpretation. As I read Frege, ontological categories are wholly supervenient on logical ones. This supervenience is the product of the fundamental status Frege assigns to judgment. That judgment should be the starting point for Frege's philosophy is unsurprising, given his animus toward the naturalism and empiricism prevalent in mid-nineteenth century German philosophy and his corresponding sympathy with Kant and Leibniz. The priority of judgment is to guarantee its objectivity, as exhibited in the linguistic practice of assertion, against any general challenge. Thus, it is meant to render unintelligible the chasm between thought and reality that is the consequence of the platonist reading (Ricketts 1976, p. 66).

The best approach to Frege's conception of judgement is through his rejection of psychologism: Frege's source of the conception of objectivity is his insistence on the need to keep separated (objective) assertions and (subjective) ventings of inner states. If assertions were just expressions of inner states, we would lack a common background on which to agree or disagree. The psychologist logician takes judgements to be inner states and assertions their expression: "The price of this identification is the conflation of contradiction with causal incompatibility" (ibid. p. 70).

Frege's notion of objectivity arises from the inseparable connection through language between assertion, judgment, content of judgment or thought, understanding and inference (Cf. ibid. p. 71). Recognising the truth of a thought is reaching a judgement; capturing a thought & recognising its truth must be distinguished: a thought can be caught without knowing if it is true. The same thought can be caught by different persons (the same feeling).

The thought is independent of the [individual] bearer. But that does not provide a foundation for a Platonist reading of Frege:

Frege's language for talking about judgment is rather a means for systematically redescribing selected features of our linguistic practices, those which elucidate the various aspects of Frege's conception of objectivity. ... Talk of several people grasping the same thought just restates the possibility of agreement that Frege takes to be intrinsic to assertion (ibid. p. 72).

The thought or its opposite, its negation, is to be recognised as true (there is only *one* species of judging. The same thought *may* not be affirmed and denied, but any person *can* eventually do it (an empirical question of psychology to which Frege is agnostic). "On this picture, the contents of judgment impose standards on our acts of judging" (ibid. p. 73).

Ricketts continues to say that the simple inferential capacity still includes the danger of enthymematic reasoning, which is what the concept-script tries to avoid.

Like Goldfarb, Ricketts sees that the universality of the principles of logic for Frege is not to be understood as formal principles (Tarski's convention T) but substantive (as well as for Russell). For Frege (and Russell), the basic laws generalise over every thing and every property – the letters in the logical laws are variables, not schematic letters. "... the notion of a logical schema that admits of multiple interpretation is foreign to Frege's thought" (ibid. p. 76). The (contemporary) ineliminable use of a truth predicate is "antithetical to Frege's conception of judgement" and "precludes any serious metalogical perspective and hence anything properly labelled a semantic theory" (idem).

Important for Ricketts' argument against the Platonism–claim is the ontological supervenience to logic:

The logico–syntactic source of the notion of an object lies in first–level generality. To be an object is to be indefinitely indicated by first–level variables. Our grasp of the notion of an object – simply the notion of an object, not an object of this or that kind – is exhausted by the apprehension of inference patterns and the recognition of the truth of the basic logical laws in which these variables figure. We encounter at this juncture the central elucidatory use for the phrase ‘means an object’ (*bedeuten*). This phrase is used in contrast with the phrase ‘indefinitely indicates an object’ (*andeuten*) to call attention to the inferential difference between statements where first–level generality is present and where it is absent, and so to distinguish first–level variables from proper names (ibid. p. 89).

Ricketts continues to say: “Similar remarks hold for the notion of a concept. The logico–syntactic source of this notion lies in our *apprehending basic inference patterns* turning on second–level variables” (ibid. p. 89, my emphasis).

I have claimed that several aspects of Frege's view on logic and philosophy of language that speak against his being a metaphysical Platonist may be found in the philosophy of the later Wittgenstein. While it is true that Wittgenstein broke with several key aspects of Frege's doctrines when elaborating the view we know mainly from *Philosophical Investigations*, it is also true that both philosophers have many fundamental points of view in common which are, on the other hand, at odds with tacit or explicit assumptions of mainstream analytic philosophy. When looking for similarities in how Frege and Wittgenstein responded to some challenges, we must bear in mind, though, that while Wittgenstein recommended the study of Frege and read him continuously all his life, his thoughts are always his: the question if Wittgenstein took anything over from Frege is misguided. Some arguments in that sense are offered in Wischin (2019). I shall mention here without further elaboration only these:

- * Both Frege and Wittgenstein held thought and language to be objective and not expressing essentially private and inaccessible feelings, emotions, beliefs, purposes, convictions or certainties (see *PI* § 504, quoted as motto) or the point of the so–called private language argument, and Wittgenstein's point that it is in language where an expectation and its fulfilment make contact (*PI* § 445).
- * Both Frege and Wittgenstein took natural language for granted and resisted any effort to form a systematic semantic theory for natural language. On the surface, their reasons for it appear to be far apart, yet in the end, their attitude was similar: Language is what we have and from

where we have to start, and we can only draw conclusions for our philosophical purpose by taking notice of how it is used.

- * Kant, Frege and the later Wittgenstein share a holist, top–down outlook that contrasts with the bottom–up view often even (wrongly) ascribed to Frege.
- * They share the context principle in a stronger sense than the *Tractatus* (See *PI* § 49), that is, as a consequence of their shared holism, not separated by very different technical apparatus.
- * Both reject logical atomism.
- * Both reject correspondence theories of truth.
- * Both reject the order of explanation implied by reference theories of meaning. What is meant here is what Erich Reck takes to be Wittgenstein’s reasons for beginning *PI* invoking the Augustinian picture of language.

1) We simply assume the existence of a realm of self–identifying objects (thus “object” and “existence” are primitive notions.) And we take tables and chairs, or people, to be paradigmatic examples.

2) The meaning of words is then explained in terms of some form of direct reference to such objects (so “reference” is primitive, too.) The simple paradigm for how to establish such reference relations is pointing and labelling, as in the baptism of babies and ships.

3) Next, the descriptive use of our words, and the truth/falsity of the sentences involving them, are explained in terms of such meaning, thus in terms of reference; and the objectivity of our judgments is explained in terms of such truth/falsity.

4) Finally, some kind of knowledge, complementing steps 1)–3), is implicitly assumed or explicitly postulated. Here the paradigm is “directly observing” things, animals, and people (and thus “knowing” them), as they parade before our eyes (Reck, 1997, p. 9)

My point here is that these points of coincidence between Frege and the later Wittgenstein are incompatible with a metaphysical realism about abstract terms. At the same time, they do not rule out transcendental Platonism, as Brandom rightly makes clear. There can be no doubt that Frege held thoughts to be objective, while neither personal ideas nor part of the physical world.

A more radical reinterpretation of Frege’s view of the philosophies of logic and language is undertaken by María José Frápolli (2023), already mentioned in the first section of this paper. I shall not attempt to summarise here her many detailed and differentiated arguments covering the entire work of Frege set against 20th Century philosophy of logic and language. As already remarked, she emphatically rejects a reading of Frege as a Platonic realist. Instead, she rescues many features of his philosophy which are compatible with principles at work in a contemporary rational pragmatist philosophy as proposed by Robert Brandom

and herself and may be seen as anticipating some of them.

The book's overall strategy is to set out principles that work for rational pragmatism, such as the Principle of Propositional Priority and the principle of assertion. The first one might be seen to be anticipated by the priority of judgements we find in Kant and Frege, and the second one the assertive force of sentences, marked by the judgement stroke in Frege's ideography. Frege might not have understood assertions to be based on discursive practice, as rational pragmatism does, but that doesn't rule out that it is a tacit, none-explicit assumption Frege's. I find that is a very fruitful, inventive strategy and helpful to disarm the still dominating ideas about Frege's supposed Platonic realism.

In what follows, though, I shall discuss a minor matter that, as I see it, has no consequence whatsoever for Frápolli's project, but may introduce unnecessary tensions in Frege's philosophy, and maybe make it difficult to understand Frege's main motive for changing his notion of judgeable content to the double notion of sense and meaning.

§ 3. One Frege: Propositional Content and the Structure of Thought

I shall begin with a passage from Frápolli's new book I used towards the end of section 1:

Abstract entities admit of analysis, but they can neither be broken down into nor built up out of pieces. They are not physical objects. Frege's *Logical Investigations* are rife with arguments and hints about the unstructured nature of propositions.

Well, of course, abstract entities are no physical objects. So they don't have physical parts. But nobody claimed they would have. Thomas Ricketts says about the question that interests us here:

Frege conceives of sentences and thoughts as structurally parallel. In particular, the analysis of the expression of a thought into complete and incomplete parts is an analysis of the thought expressed into corresponding complete and incomplete parts (Ricketts 2010, p. 191).

As already hinted at towards the end of section 2, whether it is right to say thoughts have structure or thoughts don't have structure seems irrelevant for Frápolli's general argument, as far as I am concerned. What seems important to me, however, is to note that there is an inner tension in Frege's original concept script, designed to give perceptible expression to the thought and how

components of the expression and components of the thought relate is important, as I see it, and I believe as Frege sees it, too. If we assume that the thought has no structure of its own at all, that tension becomes hard to see. It arises from the relation between the components of the sentence and the structure of the judgeable content it is formulated to express. It is important because it helps us demystify the changes Frege introduced in 1891–1893. In any case, I see my disagreement with Frápolli as minimal, and it seems to be boiling down to some kind of relatively secondary disagreement about what is meant by a thought having a structure and having parts.

Frápolli's motive for saying that unexpressed thoughts have no structure seem to be that the same thought can be analysed in various ways, meaning that the exact composition of the thought is up to how we analyse it. However, if Danielle Macbeth (2005) is right, then one tremendous advantage of Frege's logical symbolism over the linear notation we inherited from Peano is that it pictures precisely the structure of the objective thought without predetermining, for example, how it is translated into, say, natural language; it is open to various readings or formulas of the one-dimensional logical symbolism of our days¹⁰.

We must have a way to decide if we grasp a concept or a thought sharp enough to draw the correct inferences from it. Frege's worry about enthymematic reasoning, expressed by Ricketts above, come into play here. How important that aspect is for Frege may be seen from his sharp criticism of Dedekind's concept of numbers in a long piece entitled "Logik in der Mathematik" available in Frege (1983, or 1979 in English translation). Frápolli explicitly agrees that a proposition, once expressed in a sentence, acquires the structure of the sentence. If the structure of the sentence is relevant for the content of the proposition or not is determined by the inferential role of the thought expressed by the sentence. From that point of view it doesn't matter whether the grammatical structure of the sentence in a natural language is that of the active voice or the passive voice, for example, just as Frege says.

That doesn't mean, however, that the structure is completely irrelevant. "Othello loves Desdemona" and "Desdemona is loved by Othello" may express

¹⁰ As already hinted at in the first section of this paper, she suggests not to read contemporary logic back into Frege also in the sense that his notation is not simply a cumbersome equivalent of the logical symbolism of our days—as Russell suggests. When we read Frege's conditional stroke as the equivalent of the horseshoe, we overlook that it also makes transparent relations between concepts of all kinds. I find her argument quite convincing and supported, for example, by Frege's explications about the difference between Boole's symbolism and his own. See in particular chapter 1 of Macbeth (2005). Her narrative is too sophisticated and detailed to summarise it her.

the same proposition as far as the conceptual content is concerned. But we must be able to decide, taking for granted that we understand the senses in our system of signs, whether *oRd* is the right way to state the thought in a logically precise manner or, maybe, *dRo*. Some structure *is* needed to make an inference when expressed, for example, in Frege's concept script that is *supposed* to express *only* what matters for inference but ignores other features of natural language (which is richer and expresses more than just the thought in Frege's sense).

Another motive Frápolli may have for denying that unexpressed propositional content already has a structure is to fend off the building-block model. The building block model, effectively, requires a structured proposition independently from its role in inferences. However, that the propositional content is the result of the role the proposition plays in inferences does not stand in the way of a structured proposition, at least, once it is expressed, and less so, if we take Macbeth's approach to reading Fregean symbolism. Frápolli is fully aware of that fact. And once it is shown to have the logically relevant structure expressed, that structure is what matters for logic.

Now, while I think that whether unexpressed thoughts have structure or not is of little overall importance for Frápolli's narrative, I am arguing with her insistence on a structureless proposition, judgeable content or thought for the following reason, I already hinted at: I believe Peter Sullivan (2004) is right in arguing that the (technical) motive for Frege to split judgeable content into sense and meaning was an internal tension within the concept script. In particular, a tension between the need to correlate one on one the components of thoughts and of the sentences that express them, on the one hand, and to provide for concept creation by relating complex signs with simple signs and drawing new limits within established concepts. If thoughts have no structure of their own at all and instead, we take the thought to *receive* the structure from sentence expressing it, that account would seem to be circular.

Before I elaborate a bit more about that tension, there is another problem, though maybe a minor one, that comes to light in the following passage from Frápolli's book:

The nature of thoughts is not homogenously characterised in Frege's writings. The notion explained in the text just quoted corresponds to what he calls a 'judgeable content' in the *Begriffsschrift* and to what we call here 'propositional content' and 'proposition'. But Frege also points to a different layer of sense that is also covered by the term 'thought'. In (Frege 1818–9b, p. 373 ["Thoughts"]), thoughts are the senses of declarative sentences and of propositional questions. This way of characterising thoughts supports the thesis of Fregean thoughts as structured entities, the structure determined by the senses of the words that occur in the sentences and questions concerned. Several authors have

acknowledged the tension between these two alternative characterisations of Fregean senses.

I believe that the worry that Frege uses “thought” ambiguously can be tossed out if we accept that there is no contradiction between thought being what matters for inference and thought being the sense of a sentence. Because, for Frege, the sense of the sentences “Othello loves Desdemona” and “Desdemona was loved by Othello” is exactly the same, just as the judgeable content expressed by these sentences would be the same. The worry, once more, might be seen to arise from Frapolli’s insistence that the thought receives its structure from the sentence expressing it and otherwise has none.

Back to the main question, with which I shall conclude my argument, Frege uses the sample “ ξ kills ζ ”, which gives us the concept of murder, to show how out of it the concept of suicide can be generated: “ ξ kills ξ ”. Sullivan now suggests that we could create the concept of patricide by substituting the second variable with a complex variable standing for “the father of ξ ”. “The father of ξ ” is hidden in “ ξ kills ζ ”, when it stands for “Oedipus kills Laius” and thus cannot be used to generate the concept of patricide in the way it is used in “ ξ kills ζ ” and “ ξ kills ξ ” to generate the concept of suicide out of the concept of murder. Under the original interpretation of the concept script, Frege could not introduce “ ξ kills ξ ’father” for the judgeable content expressed by “ ξ kills ζ ”, because of the requirement that the concept script reflects a correlation one on one between the structure of the content and the structure of its expression in concept script. The enthymematic “Laius” would have made “Oedipus killed Laius” an invalid proposition for the substitution “Oedipus killed Oedipus’ father”. Or, as Sullivan puts it, Oedipus is nowhere to be found in “Laius” to create the required pattern that would allow the substitution to proceed. Another way to put it would be to say that “Oedipus kills Laius” and “Oedipus kills Oedipus’s father” express different facts if we identify fact and conceptual content. What is needed to identify them is to separate the *meaning* of the sentence from the content it expresses, and that is exactly what the separation of conceptual content in sense and meaning does¹¹. But it was important for Frege to have the possibility to generate new concepts by correlating simple signs and complex signs. That feat was achieved by “splitting” the conceptual content in sense and meaning.

¹¹ This also shows how profoundly mistaken most early translators of Frege were to render “Bedeutung” as “reference” or some other such expression, instead of simply “meaning” —as it is understood in German, even though it may appear awkward at first sight also to German speaking readers.

It is also important from my point of view that Sullivan concludes that the separation into sense and meaning was mainly a technical tool for a more convenient handling of the concept script, and Frege seems to confirm that view in the introduction to the *Basic Laws of Arithmetic*. Sullivan's version kills the myths surrounding that change in Frege's doctrine and allows a much more uniform reading of it.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This article is a modified version of a draft composed in 2019. While working on it, I had the opportunity to read the draft of Professor Frapolli's new book *The Priority of Propositions. A Pragmatist Philosophy of Logic* and to participate in a public discussion of it. I owe her thanks for that as well as for reading and commenting on my observations and for helping me to clarify several mistaken views I had. I would also like to thank my friend Jorge Roaro for reading the raw version of that draft and making suggestions to improve it.

REFERENCES

- BRANDOM, Robert B. (1986). "Frege's Technical Concepts". In: Haaparanta (1986), pp. 253–295.
- BRANDOM, Robert B. (2000). *Articulating Reasons. An Introduction to Inferentialism*. Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press.
- COFFA, J. Alberto (1991). *The semantic tradition from Kant to Carnap*. Cambridge, UK and New York, USA: Cambridge University Press.
- DUMMETT, Michael (1976), "Frege as Realist", *Inquiry* 19, pp. 476–485.
- DUMMETT, Michael (1981). *The Interpretation of Frege's Philosophy*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- DUMMETT, Michael (1993). *Origins of Analytical Philosophy*. Cambridge, MASS.: Harvard University Press.
- DUMMETT, Michael (1995). "The Context Principle: Centre of Frege's Philosophy". In *Logik und Mathematik. Frege-Kolloquium Jena 1993*. Berlin, New York: de Gruyter, pp. 3–19.
- FRÁPOLLI, María José and Villanueva, Neftalí (2016). "Pragmatism. Propositional Priority and The Organic Model of Propositional Individuation". *Disputatio*, viii (43), pp. 203–217.
- FRAPOLLI, María José (2023). *The Priority of Propositions. A Pragmatist Philosophy of Logic*. Cham, Suiza: Springer Nature. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-25229-7>.
- FREGE, Gottlob (1884/1997). *The Foundations of Arithmetic*. In: Beany (1997), pp. 84–129.
- FREGE, Gottlob (1918/1967). "Der Gedanke. Eine logische Untersuchung". In: *Beiträge zur Philosophie des deutschen Idealismus*. 1. Band (1918), p. 58–77. Republished in Frege, Gottlob (1967). Als: "Logische Untersuchungen. Erster Teil: Der Gedanke". In: *Kleine Schriften*, second edition (1990). Edited by Ignacio Angelleli, Hildesheim, Zürich, New York: Olms, pp. 342–362.
- FREGE, Gottlob (1918/1984). "Thought" (translated by Peter Geach and R. H. Stoothoff). In: *Collected Papers* (translated by M. Black et al. of Frege, Gottlob (1918/1967), pp. 351–372, reprinted in *The Frege Reader* (1997). Edited by Michael Beany. Malden, MA, Oxford, Victoria, Australia: Blackwell Publishing, pp. 325–345
- FREGE, Gottlob (1979). *Posthumous Writings*. Edited by Hans Hermes, Friedrich Kambartel, Friedrich Kaulbach, Translated by Peter Long, Roger White with the assistance of Raymond Hargreaves. Oxford: Basil Blackwell

- FREGE, Gottlob (1983). *Nachgelassene Schriften*. Unter Mitwirkung von Gottfried Gabriel und Walburga Rödding bearbeitet, eingeleitet und mit Anmerkungen versehen von Hans Hermes, Friedrich Kambartel und Friedrich Kaulbach (= Gottlob Frege. *Nachgelassene Schriften und wissenschaftlicher Briefwechsel*, Bd. 1), zweite, erweiterte Auflage. Hamburg: Meiner.
- HAAPARANTA, Leila, Hintikka, Jaakko (1986), Editors. *Frege Synthesized. Essays on the Philosophical and Foundational Work of Gottlob Frege*. Dordrecht, Boston, Lancaster, Tokyo: D. Reidel.
- GABRIEL, Gottfried (2002). "Frege, Lotze, and the Continental Roots of Early Analytic Philosophy". In: Reck (2002), pp. 39–51
- GOLDFARB, Warren (2010). "Frege's Conception of Logic". In: Potter, Ricketts (2010).
- LINNEBO, Øystein (2018). "Platonism in the Philosophy of Mathematics", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2018 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.).
<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2018/entries/platonism-mathematics/>.
- MACBETH, Danielle (2005). *Frege's Logic*. Cambridge, Mass & London, England: Harvard University Press.
- POTTER, Michael, Ricketts, Thomas (2010), Editors. *The Cambridge Companion to Frege*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- QUINE, Willard van Orman (1953a). "On what there is". In: *From a Logical Point of View*. Cambridge, Mass. and London, England: Harvard University Press, pp. 1 – 19.
- QUINE, Willard van Orman (1953). "Reference and Modality". In: *From a Logical Point of View*. Cambridge, Mass. and London, England: Harvard University Press, pp. 139 – 159.
- RECK, Erich H. (1997). Shortened version of «Frege's Influence on Wittgenstein: Reversing Metaphysics via the Context Principle». In *Early Analytic Philosophy*, edited by W.W. Tait. Chicago: Open Court, pp. 123–85.
<https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/a5e1/f41223452caf0775fe03ed08417e3530a9b8.pdf>.
- RECK, Erich H. (2002), Editor. *From Frege to Wittgenstein. Perspectives on Early Analytic Philosophy*. Oxford: OUP.
- RICKETTS, Thomas (1986). "Objectivity and Objecthood: Frege's Metaphysics of Judgment". In: Haaparanta (1986), pp. 65–96.

- RICKETTS, Thomas (2010). "Concepts, Objects, and the Context Principle". In: Michael Potter Tom Ricketts (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Frege*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, pp. 149—219.
- SLUGA, Hans D. (1980). *Gottlob Frege*. London, New York: Routledge.
- SULLIVAN, Peter. (2004). "Frege's Logic". In: *The Rise of Modern Logic: from Leibniz to Frege Volume 3*. Edited by Dov M. Gabbay & John Woods. ISSN 1874–5857. Elsevier Science. Kindle Edition.
- WISCHIN, Kurt (2019). "On Frege's Legacy in the Later Wittgenstein and Brandom". *Disputatio Philosophical Research Bulletin* 8, no. 9: pp. 375–407.
- WITTGENSTEIN, Ludwig (1952/2009). *Philosophical Investigations. The German text, with an English translation by G. E. M. Anscombe, P. M. S. Hacker and Joachim Schulte [IF]*. Revised 4th edition by P. M. S. Hacker and Joachim Schulte. Chichester, U.K.: Wiley-Blackwell.



Frege's Third Realm and the Structure of Thought

Frege's assertion that a third realm must be admitted between the external world of things and our subjective imaginations is frequently taken as an explicit confirmation that thoughts and logical objects in general are ideal things outside space and time and that this view makes Frege a platonistic realist. In this brief paper I offer some arguments as to why such a view might reveal a basic misunderstanding of Frege's view.

Keywords: Thoughts · Objects · Concepts · Facts · Imagination.

El tercer reino de Frege y la estructura del pensamiento

La afirmación de Frege de que se debe admitir un tercer reino entre el mundo exterior de cosas y nuestras imaginaciones subjetivas se toma frecuentemente como confirmación explícita de que pensamientos y objetos lógicos en general son cosas independientes del espacio y del tiempo y que esta visión convierte Frege en un realista platonista. En este breve trabajo arguyo que semejante punto de vista podría revelar un malentendido fundamental de la visión de Frege.

Palabras Clave: Pensamientos · Objetos · Conceptos · Hechos · Imaginación.

KURT WISCHIN is editor of *Disputatio Philosophical Research Bulletin*. His first formational contact with academic philosophy occurred in Vienna during the 1970s. PhD at the University of Granada, Spain. His work in philosophy takes as its starting point the philosophy of Wittgenstein, in particular as condensed in *Philosophical Investigations*. His current investigative activities are focussed on the foundational years of contemporary philosophy of logic and language, putting special emphasis on the development of Frege's doctrine and its influence on the formation of the *Tractatus*, as well as generally early analytical philosophy.

He has published various articles and translations and some anthologies and academic reviews. **Contacto:** Departamento de Filosofía I. Universidad de Granada. Edificio de la Facultad de Psicología, Campus de la Cartuja. 18011 Granada, España. e-mail (✉): kurt.wischin@gmail.com · **iD:** <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-2372-1703>.

HISTORIA DEL ARTÍCULO | ARTICLE HISTORY

Recibido/Received: 25–November–2022; Aceptado/Accepted: 29–September–2023; Published Online: 30–September–2023

COMO CITAR ESTE ARTÍCULO | HOW TO CITE THIS ARTICLE

Wischin, Kurt (2023). «Frege's Third Realm and the Structure of Thought». *Disputatio. Philosophical Research Bulletin* 12, no. 25: pp. 221–246.

© Studia Humanitatis – Universidad de Salamanca 2023