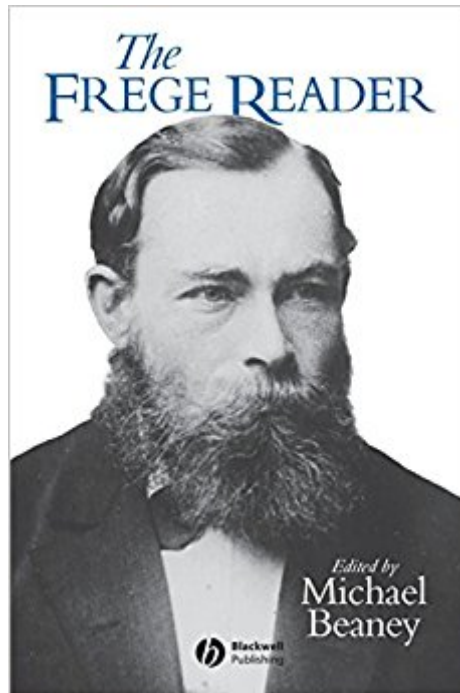




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# The Frege Reader



## Synopsis

This is the first single-volume edition and translation of Frege's philosophical writings to include all of his seminal papers and substantial selections from all three of his major works.

## Book Information

Paperback: 426 pages

Publisher: Blackwell Publishing; 1 edition (July 7, 1997)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0631194452

ISBN-13: 978-0631194453

Product Dimensions: 6 x 1.3 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.3 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars 7 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #159,782 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #107 in [Books > Textbooks > Humanities > Philosophy > Logic](#) #194 in [Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Philosophy > Logic & Language](#) #385 in [Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Philosophy > Modern](#)

## Customer Reviews

"The book aims to be the best single edition available for introductory Frege courses. It is a well organized, reasonably priced one-stop Frege shop. It is too convenient not to be used in introductory courses on Frege; in fact, as a single volume, it has no competition I can think of. The general conception is excellent. It is easily readable by graduates or advanced undergraduates. The forty-six page introduction and notes to the translations make it useful also for Frege scholars. The book's virtues are strong. I recommend it for courses on Frege, philosophy of language, philosophy of logic, and analytic philosophy." Jan Dejnozka, *History and Philosophy of Logic*

This is the first single-volume edition and translation of Frege's philosophical writings to include all of his seminal papers as well as substantial selections from all three of his major works. It is intended to provide the essential primary texts for students of logic, philosophical logic, philosophy of language, and philosophy of mathematics. It contains in particular Frege's four papers "Function and Concept", "On Concept and Object", "On Sense and Reference", and "Thought", and new translations of key parts of the *Begriffsschrift*, *The Foundations of Arithmetic*, and the *Basic Laws of Arithmetic*. The editor's substantial introduction provides the reader with an overview of the significance and development of Frege's philosophy, while the footnotes, appendices and glossary

facilitate understanding of some of the more difficult elements of Frege's thought.

You might not read about Gottlob Frege in the book-review supplements of posh newspapers on a regular basis, but John McDowell struck the right note in a 1973 review of Dummett's *\*Frege: Philosophy of Language\** in the TLS: his review was entitled "Frege: The Twentieth Century Descartes". Frege (1848-1925) was an eccentric German mathematics professor who fundamentally shaped the philosophical tendency known as "analytic" philosophy with his incredibly innovative full-length logical works, and even more with short philosophical essays that rigorously and systematically explored the nature of language and its relation to human thought. Frege's career was marked by frustration, but beginning with Bertrand Russell Anglophone philosophers trying to make philosophy (at least more) scientific took up his cause and have never left it. On the topics he addresses, Frege is a gold-standard writer; *\*The Frege Reader\**, edited by Dummett student Michael Beaney, offers a collection of his writings with its own rigor and systematicity. "Über Sinn und Bedeutung" (standardly known as "On Sense and Reference") is here, of course, and the other short writings like "On Concept and Object" and "The Thought" which philosophers still avidly discuss a hundred years later: carefully-planned selections covering Frege's pathbreaking formal logic system, drawn from *\*Begriffsschrift\** (*\*Concept-script\**) and *\*Die Grundgesetze der Arithmetik\** (*\*The Basic Laws of Arithmetic\**), help the philosophy tyro get a fundamental grasp of how Frege's logic motivated his philosophy of language. The *\*Grundgesetze\** has been translated entire recently, TeX typesetting and all, and the reader who wants a complete English translation of *\*Begriffsschrift\** can find one in van Heijenoort's *\*From Frege to Gödel\**, but for a reasonably complete collection of the *\*Kleine Schriften\** this can't be beat. The "full" three-volume collection of Frege's papers and correspondence, available for a pretty penny from University of Chicago Press, features terminology-by-committee: Beaney uses untranslated terms to navigate a "middle way" between it and the archaic translations of Max Black and co. If you are enrolled as a philosophy student, peel off a few from the bankroll for this; if you're a "sandlot philosopher", it's probably even more important.

Published in 1997 by Blackwell and edited by Michael Beaney *'The Frege Reader'* is a compilation of important aspects of Frege's corpus; articles, book excerpts and correspondence. The editor is himself an accomplished philosopher with several publications on the origins of analytic philosophy and the work of Frege. While the text has much strength, some features of the book that I particularly appreciated were: *\** It is a handy compilation of Frege's most important works including *'Thought'*,

`Function' and `Concept and `On Sinn and Bedeutung'. While these writings have been previously published it is nice to have them under one cover. Potential purchasers are advised to refer to the table of contents prior to purchase (available on-line).<sup>\*</sup> The detailed introduction (45 pages) is excellent. Beaney is an outstanding guide - a knowledgeable and gifted communicator. In addition to situating Frege's work in its historic context the introduction also addresses some of the more interesting and contentious aspects of his work. The discussion of the various translations of `bedeutung' was especially well done.<sup>\*</sup> Helpful appendices explaining Frege's logical notation and providing recommendations for further reading. Overall this is the best one volume collection of Frege writings that I have encountered. It is likely to be of interest to readers of Frege and students of analytic philosophy.

Frege is the greatest philosopher/logician since Leibniz. This book is a masterpiece that presents some of his most important works such as on Concept and Object, Sense and Meaning, etc. Only wish there was a kindle version.

What a great book this is! The Frege Reader is not for everybody, that's for sure. But when/if you get into the "right space" - then please read this book. I can't remember when I first heard the name "Frege". But I do know how my reading and study began that eventually brought me to stumble across this mathematician, logician, and philosopher. You see I'm a software developer, more specifically a database guy. I have read much of Chris Date and Hugh Darwen's work. They say that programming languages and databases are considered to be "formal systems", that is to say, a formal system of logic. Date and Darwin go on to say that what we are really doing when we call the database to create an answer set is "instantiating the predicate". So, I started on a path to learn what a "predicate" is. It did not take long before the names: Russell, Whitehead, Wittgenstein, and finally, Frege came up. There are many fine authors who have written about Frege's logic and philosophy. But, until you read his words (and his words are really, really good!) you really don't get a sense for what this man was really trying to say. This book is not just talking about numbers. This book is about everything we can talk about. Using Frege's "perfect language" we learn to distinguish between "objects", and what we say about those "objects". So, I learned from this book that when I "instantiate my predicate" I am (in Frege's words) finding the content of the concept, saturating the concept, finding its meaning, its "Bedeutung", returning thoughts to my user. In his book, LOGIC, LOGIC, and LOGIC, George Boolos quotes one of his professors. The professor said that the way to seduce good students to philosophy is to teach them Russell's and Frege's concept of number.

Programmers and DBAs can also be "seduced" by reading Frege. So, if you want to be "seduced" to philosophy, then read The Frege Reader. Stephen A. Wilson sawilson3@att.com

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