PRAGMATICS AS A BY-PRODUCT OF LOGIC IN FREGE'S EARLY WRITINGS

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Abstract

As important as understanding the elements of natural language (such as variables, quantifiers, negation, etc.) that Frege decided to incorporate in his very first formulation of a logical language (in the *Begriffsschrift,* from 1879) is also to understand the elements of natural language that he decided to leave out and, even more importantly, his justification for doing so. One popular interpretation of Frege's view is that he harbors a contempt for natural language as something inadequate and uninteresting for logic and semantics (hence, for philosophy in general). This popular view was promoted not only by several formal logicians that came after Frege (such as the first Wittgenstein, Tarski, Carnap, etc.) but also by ordinary language philosophers (such as the second Wittgenstein, Strawson, Austin, etc.). It depicts Frege as a purely Platonic logician insensitive to the richness of fundamental non-truth-functional relations essential to ordinary language and communication.

I shall argue that the popular view is fundamentally wrong. The purpose of this presentation is to examine Frege's justification for excluding some basic aspects of natural language (e.g., the subject/predicate structure of judgements) from his first formulation of the conceptual notation. A careful examination will reveal a much more sophisticated perception of semantic relations than the one ordinarily attributed to him. Indeed, in fixing the limits of his logic Frege anticipates a very subtle—if sometimes negative—characterization of pragmatic phenomena such as conventional implicatures, presuppositions and illocutionary force. These phenomena will be rediscovered about a century later in the works of philosophers and linguists such as Strawson, Austin, Grice, Karttunen and Levinson, although they are in general not fully aware of the Fregean roots of the topic.