

# Stars in His Eyes

John Joyce Nerbonne

—for Lewis G. Creary, and  
Neo-Fregeans everywhere

Mathematics is certain,  
A guard against wrong.  
Just state your assumptions,  
See what comes along.

There's really no guesswork;  
We prove what is so.  
"But how," pondered Frege,  
"How do we know?"

"Suppose there is error,  
—a flaw in the plan,  
Does it all come a tumbling,  
A house built on sand?"

"Yes, Euler had genius,  
As had, no doubt, Gauss.  
But Cantor is kooky,  
And Schröder's a louse."

And, so Gottlob Frege,  
A Jena assistant,  
Set out to reform  
A world most resistant.

"We need new foundations  
—let's try out some logic,  
So certain not even  
A Hilbert could dodge it.

"But logic's a pasttime  
For priests and old women;  
They'd like to think straight,  
But it all gets to swimmin'.

"Syllogistics, modalities,...  
—Ach, what a mess!  
I'll start out with functions;  
They're what I do best.

"A function's a map,  
—Points from here over there,  
From ten to twice ten,  
Or four to four square.

"Not just with numbers,  
One thing maps to another.  
' $x$ 's mom' is a function  
Maps  $x$  to his mother.

"Functions need arguments,  
Else they are hollow.  
But once we've got them,  
Why then concepts can follow!

"So 'smart' is a concept:  
It maps Frege to true,  
Likewise Bolzano, and  
Weierstrass, too.

"A function on functions,  
That's quantification.  
Boole never got that  
It's his mortification.

"A plum for the picking,  
Is Peano's 'successor'.  
If I get it all right,  
I just might make professor.

"More functions on functions,  
And open the throttle;  
Forget Ockham and Ambrose!  
Forget Aristotle!

"With mathematics secure,  
Philosophy's next.  
The mind, up to now,  
Is a topic most vexed.

"So meaning's a function,  
And quite mathematic  
—Impersonal, precise,  
Eternal, and static.

"Thus Brentano is wrong,  
As is John Stuart Mill.  
Psychology's nought  
But a Kantian ill.

"When words denote words,  
Some exception sets in  
—Else you'd be confusing,  
*Bedeutung* and *Sinn*.

"So Hesperus is Phosphorus,  
Perhaps a surprise.  
*Mein lieber Mann, Gottlob!*  
There are stars in your eyes!"

Do academies applaud?  
And concede without tussle?  
"Ahem," cleared the throat,  
Of Lord Bertrand Earl Russell.

"Your logic assumes,  
I'm sure you remember,  
The set of all sets,  
In themselves not a member.

"If this set's in itself,  
Then it follows, it's not.  
If it isn't, it is:  
A most terrible lot.

"For then, as you'll note,  
Contradiction ensues."  
In Jena tonight,  
They're singing the blues.