

CRITICAL STUDY

SOAMES' HISTORY OF ANALYTIC PHILOSOPHY

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Philosophical Analysis in the Twentieth Century. BY SCOTT SOAMES. VOL. I: *The Dawn of Analysis*; VOL. II: *The Age of Meaning*. (Princeton UP, 2003. Pp. xix + 411; xxii + 479. Price £15.95 each.)

I

Scott Soames' two-volume work *Philosophical Analysis in the Twentieth Century* won the American 2003 Award for Best Professional/Scholarly Book in Philosophy.¹ It has been said to be 'a marvellous introduction to analytic philosophy' and to deliver much 'solid information on this dense and difficult subject', and it is predicted to become the standard history of twentieth-century analytic philosophy.²

Soames writes clearly and candidly. At the beginning of each volume he delineates his objectives and leitmotifs. He is concerned with the development of analytic philosophy from 1900 to 1975. He aims 'to explain what the most important analytic philosophers thought and why they thought it' (I, p. xi). His method is 'to provide clear, focused and intense critical examinations of some of the most important and representative works of each major philosopher discussed ... to provide enough detail to allow one to understand and properly evaluate the main philosophical developments of the period' (I, p. xvii). A book with such laudable objectives, which holds out such high promises, and which is predicted to become the standard history of modern analytic philosophy, merits careful study and considered judgement.

The questions that I shall pose are dictated by the author's aims and methods.

(i) Does Soames provide an illuminating overview of analytic philosophy from 1900

¹ All unmarked references in the text are to these volumes. References to Wittgenstein's texts are by means of the customary abbreviations.

² Alex Byrne and Ned Hall, *Boston Review*; Charles T. Matthews, *Virginia Quarterly Review*; A.P. Martinich, *Journal of the History of Philosophy*; a reviewer for *Choice* (all these are quoted in the cover blurbs); M. Kramer, *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews*, 19 Sept. 2005.

to 1975? (ii) Does he correctly explain what the most important analytic philosophers thought and why they thought it? (iii) Does he select 'some of the most important and representative works of each major philosopher discussed'? (iv) Does he properly evaluate the main developments of the period?

II

The broad picture Soames paints is as follows. Analytic philosophy commenced with Moore's defence of common sense, and was continued by Russell, whose theory of descriptions, conception of analysis, logicism and logical atomism are recounted. He was followed by Wittgenstein, who argued in the *Tractatus* that philosophical problems arise solely from misunderstandings of language, and defended the view that all necessary truths are *a priori*, analytic, and hence true in virtue of the meanings of words. This doctrine was adopted by the Vienna Circle. They thus explained necessary truths in terms of analyticity. These doctrines were again advanced by Wittgenstein in the *Investigations*. After the Second World War, the school of Ordinary Language Philosophy developed, the leading figures of which were Ryle, Austin, Strawson, Hare and Malcolm. All identified the analytic, the necessary and the *a priori*. Following Wittgenstein, they all argued that meaning is use, but held that there can be no study of meaning from a 'theoretical or abstract scientific perspective' (II, p. xiii). The only way 'to study meaning', they held, is by 'informally assembling observations about aspects of the use of particular philosophically significant words in more or less ordinary situations' (II, p. xiv). The job of philosophers is not to construct theories, but to expose linguistic confusions.

The illusion that logical necessity can be explained by reference to analyticity was punctured by Quine, who showed that any attempt to reduce necessity to conventions of meaning is bound to fail, since any such explanation must itself invoke principles of logic. Further, Quine challenged the analytic/synthetic distinction. His argument, however, was valid only against those who believed that all necessary truths are analytic and that analyticity explains necessity. Once these 'parochial artefacts of a particular period in analytic philosophy' (I, p. 372) are set aside, the notion of analyticity, contrary to Quine's account, can readily be explained.

The demise of Ordinary Language Philosophy was brought about not only by Quine, but also by Grice, whose discovery of conversational implicature proved that meaning is distinct from use. By the mid-sixties Ordinary Language philosophers were routed, and the task of constructing a scientific theory of meaning for a natural language was commenced by Davidson. Finally, in 1970, Kripke gave his three lectures on naming and necessity, which heralded a new era in analytic philosophy. As far as philosophy of language is concerned, Kripke's *Naming and Necessity* 'is among the most important works ever' (II, p. 336). It 'fundamentally changed the way in which much of philosophy is done'. It sharply distinguished between 'the metaphysical notion of necessity and the epistemological notion of a priority' [*sic*], and it showed that there is much more to philosophy than the analysis of language. Kripke demonstrated that there are *a posteriori* necessary truths and *a priori*

contingent ones. Indeed, his ‘discovery of the necessary *a posteriori* ... [is] one of the great philosophical achievements of the twentieth century; it has transformed the philosophical landscape, recalibrated our sense of what is possible, and reshaped our sense of our own philosophical past’ (II, pp. 455–6).

This is, to be sure, only a sketch of Soames’ 860-page history; but it is, I hope, an accurate sketch of that large painting. The question I shall address is whether the painting is accurate.

III

Soames does not paint a plausible picture of the development of analytic philosophy. In its selection of materials it is unrepresentative: significant figures are omitted and pivotal works are not discussed. The complex relationships between different overlapping strands in the analytic movement are not elucidated. In fact, the book is less a history of analytic philosophy than a series of critical essays on select figures and a few of their works, often chosen primarily to substantiate a thesis which is erroneous and to score points which are questionable. Soames’ evaluations are distorted by his principles of selection, and by his incomprehension of many of the works he discusses and of the issues involved. I shall substantiate this in what follows.

Soames commonly fails to recount the historical context of major works of the period. For example, the problem-setting context provided by the Fregean and Russellian innovative function-theoretic logic is not adequately described, nor are its philosophical commitments unravelled. That the problematic relationship between the new logical calculus and natural languages was the leitmotiv of much twentieth-century analytic philosophy is not explained. Nor is the conflict between the ‘ideal language’ philosophers and the ‘ordinary (natural) language’ philosophers (to which Rorty’s anthology *The Linguistic Turn* was dedicated) satisfactorily depicted. These omissions sometimes have non-trivial consequences. For example, the basic idea (*Grundgedanke*) of the *Tractatus*, i.e., that there are no logical objects – a deep anti-Fregean thesis – is not mentioned, presumably because it cannot be rendered intelligible without the necessary background. Similarly, the picture theory of the *Tractatus* is not presented in its proper context of Frege’s and Russell’s defective handling of the problems of intentionality, and hence not explained as addressing them. The discussion of the same problems in *Investigations* §§428–65 – the deepest criticisms of the picture theory – is omitted altogether. That the philosophers whom Soames dubs ‘Ordinary Language philosophers’, e.g., Ryle and Strawson, were responding, *inter alia*, to ‘Ideal Language philosophers’, such as Carnap, and regimenters, such as Quine, is not clarified. So the decades-long disagreement between Quine and Strawson over regimentation, quantification and ontology is not recounted, nor is the disagreement between Strawson and Carnapian over explication.

Logical positivism was the most influential philosophical movement of the twentieth century. It changed the face of philosophy, especially in the USA, where philosophy is deeply indebted to the positivists (especially to Carnap, Feigl, Tarski, Hempel, Reichenbach and Bergmann). Soames, however, mentions none of this.

Indeed, no account of the *development* of analytic philosophy in America is given, but only discussions of Stevenson, Malcolm (one unimportant paper), Quine, Davidson and Kripke. Soames treats logical positivism almost exclusively by reference to the popularizing writings of a British 26-year-old graduate who spent four months in Vienna, and barely spoke German, namely the young A.J. Ayer. Undoubtedly *Language, Truth and Logic* was important. But its significance as a pivotal text within the history of analytic philosophy cannot be compared with Carnap's *Logical Structure of the World* (1928), *The Logical Syntax of Language* (1934), and his later works on semantics *Introduction to Semantics* (1942) and *Meaning and Necessity* (1947). Failure to examine the work of Schlick, Carnap, Neurath, Hempel, Feigl, Waismann, Reichenbach, not to mention the distinguished American positivists Charles Morris and Ernest Nagel, is unwarranted, given the magnitude of their contribution to philosophy of science, language and logic. The presentation of Quine's criticisms of Carnap's conventionalist account of necessary truth and of analyticity without a careful statement of Carnap's views, and without mention of Carnap's meticulously formulated responses to Quine (both in his reply to Quine in the *Library of Living Philosophers*, and in his correspondence with Quine, *Dear Carnap, Dear Van*), results in a very unfair and incomplete account of the controversy.

The presentation of so-called Ordinary Language Philosophy is flawed by mischaracterizations, falsifications and omissions. Ryle is mischaracterized as a logical behaviourist. Readers of Soames' account would be surprised to learn who wrote the following lines: 'we employ for saying things about the mental life of people many active verbs which do signify acts of mind ... correctly list[ing] *calculating, pondering* and *recalling to mind* as mental acts or processes'. Ryle is said to advocate 'the new style of ordinary language linguistic analysis' (II, p. 90). But it was he who wrote that 'The difficulty is to steer between the Scylla of a Platonist and the Charybdis of a lexicographical account of the business of philosophy and logic', and who presciently observed 'from transatlantic journals I gather that at this very moment British philosophy is dominated by some people called "linguistic analysts"'. He is said to have assimilated necessary truths and analytic ones – but no textual evidence is offered for this accusation.

Strawson is said to be 'an Ordinary Language philosopher'. But this is badly to mischaracterize him, since he insisted that the method of examining the ordinary uses of words, fruitful though it is, 'has severe limitations' and 'takes too much for granted', that the matters which were his concern 'lie at a deeper level than [this] method is capable of reaching or displaying', and that he does not think 'you will detect many traces of this method in my work'.³ It is a misrepresentation to suggest that as a member of the School of Ordinary Language Philosophy, Strawson had an animus to general theorizing in philosophy, since he was demonstrably never committed to 'informally assembling observations about aspects of the use of particular philosophically significant words in more or less ordinary situations'. His most important and representative work is not the minor paper he wrote in *Analysis* 1949

³ P.F. Strawson, 'My Philosophy', in P.K. Sen and R.R. Verma (eds), *The Philosophy of P.F. Strawson* (New Delhi: Indian Council of Research, 1995), p. 15; see also Strawson, *Individuals* (London: Methuen, 1959), pp. 9–10.

on truth, in which he suggested a performative account of truth, never again repeated in his many later papers on the subject. His highly influential 'On Referring' (1950) is passed over in silence. There is no mention of his *Introduction to Logical Theory* (1949), which challenged the received status of the modern logical calculus, of *Individuals* (1959), which introduced the notion of descriptive metaphysics, demonstrated the primacy of material objects and persons in our conceptual scheme, and gave the debate about the nature of a person a new orientation that guided discussion of the theme for three decades, of *The Bounds of Sense*, which revolutionized Kant studies, or of *Subject and Predicate in Logic and Grammar* (1974), which advanced an elaborate theory concerning the structure of natural languages.

Austin's destructive *Sense and Sensibilia* is discussed, but his far more influential, methodical and systematic *How To Do Things with Words* is not. To be sure, it does not fit Soames' stereotype of Ordinary Language Philosophy as unmethodical, unsystematic, and dedicated to 'piecemeal observations of ordinary use' (II, p. xiv). Austin too is claimed to have held that all necessary truths are analytic and true in virtue of the meanings of words, but again no source is given to substantiate this.

The only writing of Malcolm's that is discussed is his youthful 1942 paper (later recanted) 'Moore and Ordinary Language'. Whether paradigm case arguments of the sort there deployed are or are not defensible is still a matter for debate,⁴ but whether Malcolm's most representative work is this article is not (*vide* his papers in *Knowledge and Certainty* and *Thought and Knowledge*, his work on philosophy of mind in *Memory and Mind*, and *Consciousness and Causality*). Nor is Malcolm's article representative of the work of Wittgenstein's distinguished pupils, e.g., Wisdom, von Wright (who invented modern deontic logic and the logic of norms, and whose contribution to axiology, on the one hand, and to analytic hermeneutics, on the other, is unsurpassed), Anscombe (whose *Intention* gave philosophy of action and of practical reasoning a new agenda), Geach, and Black (who, together with Malcolm, made Cornell one of the great philosophy centres in the USA), none of whom is mentioned. A similar blind spot affects Soames' selection of philosophers in Britain: Broad, Ramsey and Braithwaite from Cambridge get no mention; nor do Prichard, Price, Kneale, Prior, Hampshire, Berlin and Hart. Soames would claim, no doubt, that 'their influence on analytic philosophers across the board was not as great as those on which we have focused' (II, p. 461). But this is unconvincing, since some of the writings that Soames does discuss are relatively unimportant and were not influential, many writings he has omitted are of much greater importance and were far more influential, and some figures whom he fails to discuss were both important and influential. Strawson's influence is hardly attributable to his article on truth in *Analysis* 1949, and Grice's discussion of conversational implicature was hardly more influential than Carnap's *awwe*. Failure to consider Grice's explanation of linguistic meaning in terms of speakers' intentions cannot be warranted by lack of influence; nor can the omission of Popper's *The Open Society* and *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*. Soames acknowledges that he has left a gap in not discussing Rawls' *A Theory of Justice*, which 'redefined and reinvigorated political philosophy in the English-speaking

⁴ See O. Hanfling, *Philosophy and Ordinary Language* (London: Routledge, 2000), ch. 5.

world' (II, p. 462), but he does not mention his omission of Hart, who redefined and resuscitated legal philosophy, or Berlin, whose writings on liberty and on incommensurability of values ensured that political philosophy was invigorated before Rawls' writings on justice.

IV

I turn now to Soames' detailed accounts of philosophers' views. It is impossible to examine all of these here; I shall concentrate on his accounts of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* and *Investigations*, which fill 120 pages of his book. The centrality of these texts for the period is undeniable, and their misrepresentation non-trivial.

I noted that Soames does not describe the problem-setting context of the *Tractatus*, or outline the Fregean doctrines which are among its primary targets. Wittgenstein's criticisms of Frege's conceptions of logic, sense, assumption and assertion, of determination of logical functions, and of the nature of logical truths, go unmentioned. So do his criticisms of Russell on propositions, logic, logical truth and philosophy. One would not know, from Soames' account, that both Frege and Russell, for different reasons, thought that generality, rather than, as Wittgenstein insisted, necessity, was the mark of propositions of logic, and that neither held a proposition such as 'Either it is raining or it is not raining' to be a proposition of logic at all, but an application of a proposition of logic. So one would not gather that Wittgenstein transformed our conception of what a logical proposition is. Nor would one know that Wittgenstein introduced the T/F notation in order to demonstrate the dispensability of the logical connectives. His *Grundgedanke* was that *there are no logical objects* – that the connectives and quantifiers are not names of logical entities (functions or relations); but neither this claim, nor its far-reaching ramifications, are examined.

Soames misrepresents the *Tractatus* ontology. He supposes that because the substance of the world can determine only a form and not any material properties, therefore simple objects do not exhibit specific properties such as colour (I, p. 208), not realizing that Wittgenstein assumed that minimally discriminable shades of colour *are* simple objects. So Soames claims that colours are material properties, whereas, according to Wittgenstein, it is *having a certain colour* that can be a material property of a complex – the shade of colour had is one among the many objects that form the coloured complex. Hence Soames misinterprets Wittgenstein's observation that '*Roughly speaking*, objects are colourless' (*TLP* 2.0232), which is no more than a metaphorical reiteration that simple objects themselves have no external (but only internal) properties – external, material, properties being determined by the *concatenation* of objects. Consequently, Soames misunderstands the claim that if two objects have the same logical form, the only distinction between them, apart from their external properties, is that they are different (*TLP* 2.0233). He supposes that this shows that two objects *a* and *b* have no intrinsic nature to differentiate them, apart from their non-identity with each other. He fails to realize that what Wittgenstein had in mind is that if a shade of blue is object *a* and a shade of green is

object *b*, then the only difference between *a* and *b* (given that they have the same combinatorial possibilities) is that they are different (*PG* 208–9 criticizes this). Obviously this does not mean that we cannot say *what* they are, or how they *can* combine with other objects, e.g., spatiotemporal points. Failing to understand the ontology, Soames concludes that ‘Wittgenstein seems to be forced into saying that all our talk about the world reduces to talk about simple objects that have no properties and cannot be combined in any ways we can imagine, but nevertheless do combine in ways we cannot explain or comprehend’. These ontological doctrines, Soames says, ‘are among the darkest and most implausible aspects of the *Tractatus*’ (I, p. 212). This merely betokens incomprehension; the doctrines are indeed mistaken (as Wittgenstein himself later explained), but not impenetrable.

Soames similarly misunderstands the logical ideas of the *Tractatus*. He supposes that ‘*xRy*’ is not a simple name (and hence that relations are not simple objects) – but even if it is not evident (as it was meant to be) from the *Tractatus* that relations are objects, we know that this was what Wittgenstein meant, from later statements.⁵ Soames avers that according to Wittgenstein atomic sentences *stand for* states of affairs (I, p. 218). But they do not *stand for* anything – they are held to *depict* states of affairs (whereas *names* depict nothing and *stand for* objects). He contends that the negation of an atomic proposition does not picture or correspond to any fact if it is true. But that is false – it corresponds to the negative fact that the state of affairs does not obtain (*TLP* 2.06, 4.063). His deepest misrepresentation is that according to the *Tractatus* (i) all necessity is linguistic, i.e., due to the meanings of words (I, p. 233); (ii) all necessary truths are analytic (I, p. 261); (iii) logical propositions are meaningful in an extended sense because they are the inevitable product of the rules governing the logical vocabulary used in constructing molecular non-logical propositions (I, pp. 234–5); (iv) metaphysical necessity is true in virtue of meaning (I, p. 253).

But the *Tractatus* did not claim that propositions of logic are true in virtue of the meanings of the logical connectives, since it denied that these have a meaning – they are operators. Only names have a meaning. Sentences have a sense. Operators have neither. Moreover, the logical connectives can be dispensed with entirely in the T/F notation. Wittgenstein did not think, as the Vienna Circle did, that truths of logic are consequences of arbitrary conventions of meaning. On the contrary, they flow from the essential nature of the proposition – which *necessarily* reflects the nature of the world. They represent *the scaffolding of the world* (*TLP* 6.124). Far from advocating the conventionality of logic, as Carnap was to do, Wittgenstein insisted that logic is *transcendental* (*TLP* 6.13). Logical truths are indeed necessary and ‘analytic’. But, *contra* Soames, Wittgenstein *explicated* analyticity (*TLP* 6.11) by reference to his explanation of logical truths, not the other way round. Logical truths are not ‘meaningful in an extended sense’; they are not even ‘senseful’ (*sinnvoll*) – but *senseless* (not nonsense). Though well formed, they say nothing, and are degenerate cases of propositions with a sense. Wittgenstein never thought that logical truths are ‘metaphysical necessities’. There *are* metaphysical necessities (e.g., that the world consists

⁵ See his remark to Desmond Lee on *TLP* 2.01, “‘Objects’ also include relations’: D. Lee (ed.), *Wittgenstein’s Lectures, Cambridge 1930–1932* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980), p. 120.

of facts, that space and time are forms of objects) but they are not *logical* necessities. Nor are they analytic, let alone 'linguistic'. They are not conventions or consequences of conventions. They are strictly speaking indescribable by well formed propositions – but they are *shown* by such propositions. What is thus shown are not conventions of language, but the *form of the world*.

Soames' final major misinterpretation of the *Tractatus* is his claim that Wittgenstein's ultimate position is that 'the Tractarian system must be rejected', and its patent inadequacies should be avoided (I, p. 252) – so the whole book was written in a spirit of Kierkegaardian irony. This is the orthodox view of the New American Wittgensteinians. It is inconsistent with everything that Wittgenstein ever said about the *Tractatus*, and there exists no evidence whatsoever to support it.⁶

V

Soames' account of the later Wittgenstein is equally mistaken. He claims that Wittgenstein infected the Vienna Circle and Ordinary Language philosophers with his misguided idea that analyticity, apriority and necessity are 'one and the same' (I, p. 262). His deflationary conception of philosophy, according to Soames, derives from his presuppositions that philosophical theses are not empirical, and therefore must be necessary and *a priori* (II, p. 29). His philosophical theses are analytic truths. They are supposed to be obvious and unsurprising, but in fact are neither (*ibid.*). Wittgenstein, for consistency's sake (according to Soames), does not always offer any substantial argument to support them. So Soames offers to do so for him, which, Soames admits, 'often requires going substantially beyond what is explicit in the text' (II, p. 30). And so indeed he does.

According to Soames, Wittgenstein's remarks about philosophy are 'to some extent, self-undermining', since 'the central theses in the *Investigations* lead to a view of philosophy at variance with the theses themselves' (*ibid.*). On the one hand, Wittgenstein says that philosophy 'leaves everything as it is', and so should not establish anything surprising or informative (II, p. 70), and on the other he propounds revisionary theses, e.g., that we cannot describe our own sensations, and that ascribing sensations to others is attributing to them a behavioural disposition (II, p. 51). This is multiply mistaken. (i) According to Wittgenstein, what should be 'left as it is' is the *grammar of our language* (*PI* §124) – it is not the job of philosophy to concoct new ideal languages. (ii) This is *not* a form of quietism. On the contrary, Wittgenstein held that good philosophy would curb the growth of mathematics (*PG* 381) and restrain psychology within the bounds of sense that it so frequently transgresses (*PI*, p. 232). (iii) Wittgenstein did not claim that we cannot describe our own sensations or feelings (cf. *RPP* II, §§156, 722–8). (iv) He did not subscribe to any behaviourist doctrine that the pains of others are merely dispositions to behave (*PI* §304–8). (v) What is revisionary about Wittgenstein is not theses he propounds (see below), but his demolition of received philosophical theses and presuppositions.

⁶ This is demonstrated in detail in my 'Was He Trying to Whistle It?', repr. in my *Wittgenstein: Connections and Controversies* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001), pp. 98–140.

Soames accuses Wittgenstein of holding, in his later philosophy, that all necessary truths are analytic. Wittgenstein never used the term ‘analytic’ in the *Investigations*. Indeed, there is only *one* remark on analyticity in the whole of Wittgenstein’s post-1929 *Nachlass* of about 18,000 pages, namely, ‘Isn’t what I am saying what Kant meant by saying that $5 + 7 = 12$ is not analytic but synthetic *a priori*?’ (see *PG* 404). This does not merely fail to substantiate Soames’ view, it contradicts it.

The logical positivists claimed that analytic truths are ‘true in virtue of the meanings of words’. Soames appears not to know that Wittgenstein explicitly *denied* that *any* propositions are ‘true in virtue of the meanings of words’. The thought that they are was precisely what Wittgenstein *criticized* in his discussion of the mythology of a meaning-body (*Bedeutungskörper*). The meanings of words are not kinds of entities that can make analytic propositions true. No proposition can *follow* from the meaning of a word, and rules of inference are not determined by independent word-meanings. That ‘ $\sim \sim p$ ’ implies ‘ p ’ does not *follow* from the meaning of ‘not’ (or of ‘ \sim ’) or from its truth-tabular definition. Rather, it is partly *constitutive* of its meaning.⁷

Soames ascribes *theses* to Wittgenstein, despite Wittgenstein’s explicit insistence that he propounded none. He wrote ‘If one tried to advance *theses* in philosophy, it would never be possible to debate them, because everyone would agree with them’ (*PI* §128). This was written *à propos* Waismann’s *Thesen* that were circulated to members of the Vienna Circle, consisting of a rehash of the metaphysical, essentialist pronouncements of the *Tractatus*. But the later Wittgenstein did not think that there could be any *such* theses; nor did he propound any *empirical* theses. What may look to Soames like theses are no more than what Wittgenstein called ‘grammatical propositions’ – rules for the use of words in the guise of descriptions, synoptic representations thereof, and exclusionary grammatical propositions (e.g., that there is no such thing as a private language).

Soames thinks that ‘the centre of gravity’ of the *Investigations* is (a) the discussion of rule-following and (b) ‘the contentious and revisionary doctrines about psychological language’ derived from it (II, p. 31). This is disputable, but cannot be disputed here. Space permits only the examination of the former (the latter is no less erroneous). Wittgenstein’s main ‘thesis’, according to Soames is that ‘In using words we understand, we are not invariably guided by rules ... that determine the correct application of our terms. Typically we apply a word instinctively to a previously unconsidered case. What makes such an application correct is its agreement with applications made by the larger linguistic community’ (II, p. 25). We do not follow ‘internal rules’ but our *inclinations* (II, pp. 33–4).

Readers familiar with the debates about following rules in the 1980s will realize that this ‘thesis’ is not Wittgenstein’s, but Kripke’s Wittgenstein’s. First, Wittgenstein did not say that our literal uses of words are not *invariably* guided by rules. The rules for the uses of words that concerned him are given by explanations of meaning, and there *are* standard explanations of what the literal meaning of a word in use is.

⁷ See *PG* 53–6, and F. Waismann, *The Principles of Linguistic Philosophy* (London: Macmillan, 1965), pp. 234–7. For an excellent discussion of Wittgenstein’s disagreements with the conventionalism of the Vienna Circle, see G.P. Baker, *Wittgenstein, Frege and the Vienna Circle* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988), ch. 7.

Rather, what he claimed was that our rule-guided use of words is not *everywhere* guided by rules, e.g., not in borderline cases. Secondly, he did not assert that when we reach 'the last interpretation' we apply a word without *any* rule, but rather that we apply a word that *is* rule-governed without any *further* rule. Thirdly, he did not claim that when applying a word to previously unconsidered cases we do so 'instinctively', or 'according to our inclinations'. Rather, 'I follow the rule *blindly*', without needing to make *choices*, without questioning (*PI* §219) – I know exactly what to do. The rule 'always tells us the same, and we do what it tells us' (*PI* §223), 'we look to the rule for instruction and *do something*, without appealing to anything else for guidance' (*PI* §228). 'it is my last court of appeal for the way I am to go' (*PI* §230), and 'I draw its consequences as a matter of course' (*PI* §238). Did Wittgenstein hold that what makes the application of a word correct is agreement with the community? No:

I cannot describe how (in general) to employ rules, except by *teaching* you, *training* you to employ rules.

I may now, e.g., make a talkie of such instruction. The teacher will sometimes say 'That's right'. If the pupil should ask him 'Why?' – he will answer nothing, or at any rate nothing relevant, not even: 'Well, because we all do it like that'; that will not be the reason (Z §§318–19).

and again:

Does this mean, e.g., that the definition of 'same' would be this: same is what all or most human beings with one voice take for the same? – Of course not (*RFM* 406).

Does human agreement *decide* what is red? Is it decided by appeal to the majority? Were we taught to determine colour in *that way*? (Z §431).

Having ascribed to Wittgenstein a Kripkean thesis he never held, Soames refutes it by reference to reflections which, ironically, Wittgenstein himself advanced, e.g., on Cruseo's following unshared but shareable rules (MS 124, pp. 213, 221; MS 165, pp. 74, 103–8, 116; MS 166, 4). From this Soames concludes that 'the prospects for a successful defence of [Wittgenstein's] central thesis about the role of community agreement in grounding meaning and explaining linguistic understanding do not appear to me to be very promising' (II, p. 44). The thesis is not Wittgenstein's; Wittgenstein did not go in for 'grounding meaning' (grammar is autonomous); and he did not suggest that what makes the use of a word correct is that it agrees with the use of the rest of the linguistic community.

VI

According to Soames, it was Kripke who at last set analytic philosophy on the true path of a science. This is not the place to determine the truth of Kripke's theses in his *Naming and Necessity*. But it did not require Kripke to point out that the analytic/synthetic distinction is different from the epistemological *a priori/a posteriori* one, and

that both differ from the metaphysical necessary/contingent one. Ayer's mistakes were pointed out, at the very latest, in 1962, by the Kneales in *The Development of Logic*, where they emphasized that the three distinctions are not synonymous, and not even co-extensive.⁸

It is equally mistaken to suppose that it was Kripke's 'discovery' that there are *a posteriori* necessities. Whether this alleged discovery 'has transformed the philosophical landscape, recalibrated our sense of what is possible, and reshaped our sense of our own philosophical past', as Soames asserts, is a matter for debate in another forum. But the venerable claim that there are objective *a posteriori* necessary truths was propounded by twentieth-century analytic philosophers long before Kripke, for example by Kneale in his *Probability and Induction* in 1949.

To represent the connecting thread of the history of analytic philosophy after 1920 as the tale of a fifty-year entanglement in a misguided assimilation of the analytic, *a priori* and necessary, from which we were ultimately saved by Kripke, is a caricature. To think that post-war British philosophy can be summarized as 'Ordinary Language Philosophy' that was caught in the same net, and was opposed to anything other than 'piecemeal observations of ordinary use', grossly misrepresents the philosophy done in Britain between 1945 and 1975. To suppose that the identification of the meaning of a word with its use was refuted by Grice's 'discovery' of conversational implicature (II, ch. 9) is to betray a shallow understanding of what is meant in these contexts by 'use', and an erroneous evaluation of Grice's examples.⁹ To confine American philosophy to Stevenson, Quine, Davidson and Kripke is to renounce any pretensions to write even an accurate history of *American* analytic philosophy of the twentieth century.

That Soames' book should be thought to be the best scholarly book in philosophy in 2003 in the USA is disturbing because of its implications for the state of American philosophical scholarship. Soames' overarching goal was 'to help forge a common understanding of the recent philosophical past that illuminates where we now stand' (I, p. xvi). What he has done is to strengthen a current American stereotype of the history of analytic philosophy. If, as has been predicted, his book becomes the standard history of twentieth-century analytic philosophy, then history will indeed be, as Henry Ford put it, 'bunk'.

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⁸ W. and M. Kneale, *The Development of Logic* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), pp. 637–8.

⁹ See H.-J. Glock, 'Abusing Use', *Dialectica*, 50 (1996), pp. 205–23; Hanfling, ch. 10.