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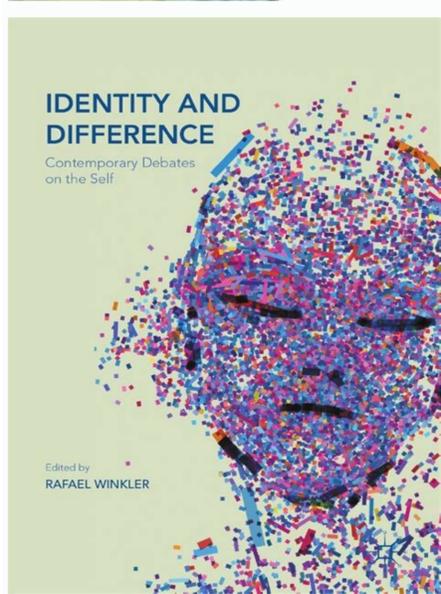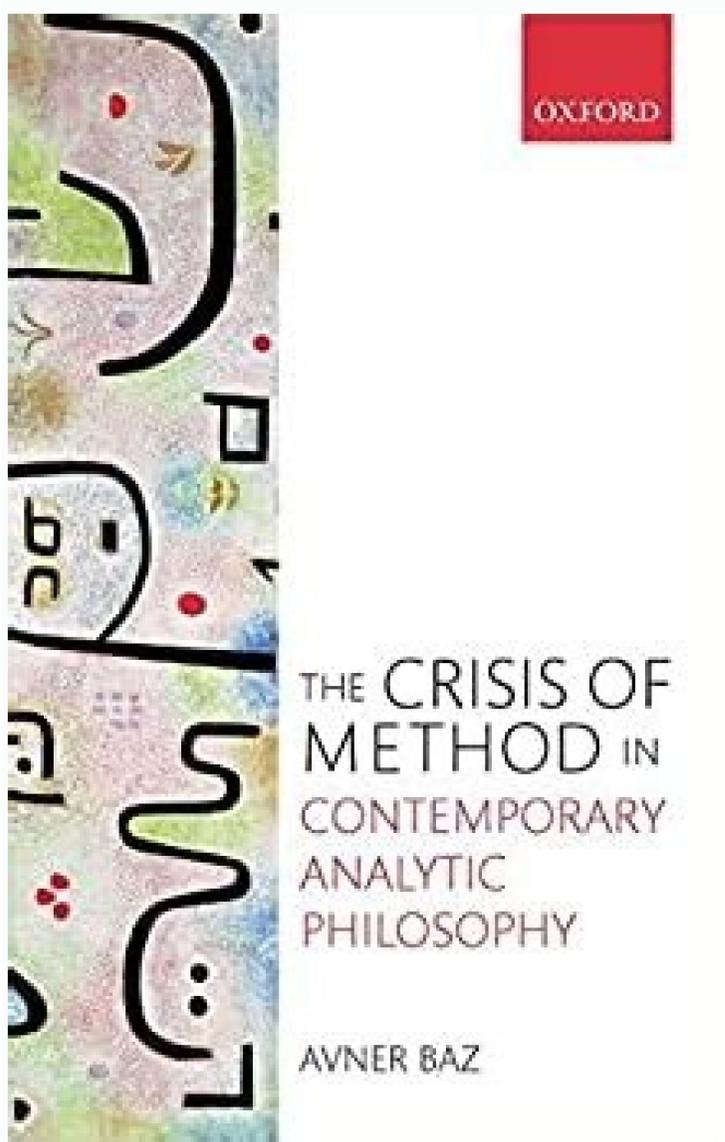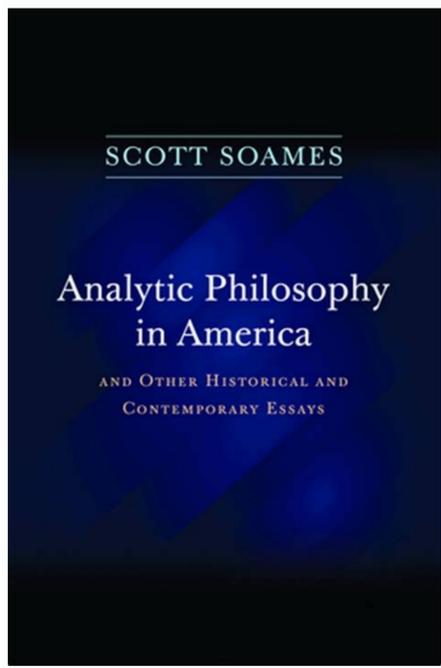
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SCOTT SOAMES

Analytic Philosophy
in America

AND OTHER HISTORICAL AND
CONTEMPORARY ESSAYS

OXFORD

THE CRISIS OF
METHOD IN
CONTEMPORARY
ANALYTIC
PHILOSOPHY

AVNER BAZ

IDENTITY AND
DIFFERENCE

Contemporary Debates
on the Self

Edited by
RAFAEL WINKLER

4, 445-465. For instance, neither mathematical truths such as 2+2=4, nor logical truths such as If ((a=b) &(b=c)) then (a=c), nor semantic truths such as All bachelors are unmarried men, depend upon the realization of any corresponding, worldly state of affairs, either in order to be true or to be known. Peirce and C. Reprinted in Moore 1993, 147-70. It was now becoming clear, however, that this was no easy task. 1931: Interpretation and Analysis in Relation to Bentham's Theory of Definition,London: Kegan, Paul, Trench, Trubner &Co. Wisdom, John. As mentioned previously, Wittgenstein's Tractatus proved to be the most influential expression of logical atomism. Thus, the task of the philosopher is not to question the truth of common sense propositions, but to provide their correct analyses or explanations. Moreover, what empirical evidence we do have suggests that it is likely false, for, as Quine sees it, "definition—except in the extreme case of the explicitly conventional introduction of new notation—hinges on prior relationships of synonymy" (Quine 1951, 27). Consistent with the Quinean insight that meaning is connected to holistic worldviews or, in more metaphysical terms, world-states, possible worlds semantics defines important logical concepts such as validity, soundness and completeness, as well as concepts that earlier logics were incapable of handling—such as possibility and necessity—in terms of total descriptions of a way that some worlds or all worlds might be/have been. Like so many philosophers before him, Russell was attracted to the objective certainty of mathematical and logical truths. by M. The Austrian philosopher Alexius Meinong took the latter horn of the dilemma, notoriously postulating a realm of non-existent objects. Urmson, J. But a hand, according to the ordinary meaning of "hand," is a material object, and a material object, according to the ordinary meaning of "material object," is an external object, an object that isn't just in our mind. For instance, Norman Malcolm represents the standard view of Moore for much of the twentieth century when he says that "the essence of Moore's technique of refuting philosophical statements consists in pointing out that these statements go against ordinary language" (Malcolm 1942, 349). According to logical atomism, propositions are built out of elements corresponding to the basic constituents of the world, just as sentences are built out of words. Though Russell and Wittgenstein differed over some of the details of logical atomism, these disagreements can be ignored for present purposes. Charlton, William. Correspondingly, the Idealists believed that no statement about some isolated object could be true simpliciter, since, on their view, to speak of an object in isolation would be to ignore the greater part of the truth about it, namely, its relations to everything else. 1961: Fly and the Fly Bottle: Encounters with British Intellectuals, New York: Columbia University Press. It is even reported that a sign reading "just say no to the history of ideas" once hung on a door in the Philosophy building at Princeton University (Grafton 2004, 2). The members of both Circles made contributions to a number of different philosophical and scientific discussions, including logic and the philosophy of mind (see for example this Encyclopedia's articles on Behaviorism and Identity Theory); however, their most important contributions vis-à-vis the development of analytic philosophy were in the areas of the philosophy of language, philosophical methodology and metaphilosophy. 1925: "A Defense of Common Sense" in J. The third phase, approximately 1930-1945, is characterized by the rise of logical positivism, a view developed by the members of the Vienna Circle and popularized by the British philosopher A. Reprinted in Moore 1993, 23-44. (For more on this, see Preston 2004, 2005a-b). Reck, Erich (ed.). His case begins with the observation that we know many things despite the fact that we do not know how we know them. Ordinary-Language Philosophy Thanks to G.E. Moore, ordinary-language analysis had had a place in the analytic movement from the very beginning. 1989: Studies in the Way of Words, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press. To escape the turmoil of World War II, several members of the Vienna Circle emigrated to the United States where they secured teaching posts and exercised an immense influence on academic philosophy. Throughout the Tractatus there runs a distinction between showing and saying. For example, just as one elucidates the meaning of "brother" by saying a brother is a male sibling or by saying it means "male sibling," so one might say that seeing a hand means experiencing a certain external object—which is exactly what Moore claims in his paper "Proof of an External World" (Moore 1939). Thus, idealism was a brand of metaphysical monism, but not a form of materialism, the other leading form of metaphysical monism. Ayer. Mehta, Ved. Quine, W. This is the general form of a proposition. 2003. Philosophical Analysis in the Twentieth Century, 2 vols., Princeton: Princeton University Press. "A philosophical problem", says Wittgenstein, "has the form: 'I don't know my way about'" (Wittgenstein 1953, ¶123), that is, I don't know how to speak properly about this, to ask a question about this, to give an answer to that question. 1950: "Problems and Changes in the Empiricist Criterion of Meaning." Revue Internationale de Philosophie 4:41-63; reprinted in Ayer (ed.) 1959. 33, no. It was their views in these areas that combined to form logical positivism. Language is, for the later Wittgenstein, an intrinsically social phenomenon, and its correct modes are as diverse as the many successful modes of corporate human life. The other dogma is reductionism: the belief that each meaningful statement is equivalent to some logical construct upon terms which refer to immediate experience. Reprinted in Moore 1993, 1-19. The other two are epistemology and the philosophy of language; all three are frequently referred to as "core" analytic areas or sub-disciplines.) This is noteworthy given analytic philosophy's traditional anti-metaphysical orientation. If one can then explain analyticity in terms of synonymy, and explain both necessity and a prioricity in terms of analyticity, then one will have theories of analytic, necessary, and a priori truths consistent with scientific naturalism. After publishing the Tractatus, Wittgenstein retired from philosophy and went to teach grade-school in the Austrian countryside. In fact the logical positivists drew many of their views straight from the pages of the Tractatus (though their reading of it has since been criticized as being too inclined to emphasize the parts friendly to scientific naturalism at the expense of those less-friendly). Consequently, at its core is a view called scientism: the view that all knowledge is scientific knowledge. This is so because every purported definition fails to capture the meaning of "good." All of these cases exhibit what proved to be the most influential aspect of Moore's philosophical work, namely his method of analysis, which many of his contemporaries took to be linguistic analysis. Alternatives tied less tightly to the empirical sciences soon emerged, with the result that philosophical practice in contemporary analytic philosophy is now quite eclectic. A generation before Russell and the Principia, Frege had provided his own system of formal logic, with its own system of symbolic notation. Table of Contents 1. Moore's use of the term "analysis" in this way is the source of the name "analytic philosophy." Early on in analytic history, Moorean analysis was taken to be a matter of rephrasing some common sense proposition so as to yield greater insight into its already-clear and unquestionable meaning. Logical positivism was popularized in Britain by A.J. Ayer, who visited with the Vienna Circle in 1933. 1944, 3-20. Thus, despite its formalism, possible world semantics approximates some aspects of traditional metaphysics that earlier analytic philosophy eschewed. 1980: Naming and Necessity Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press. A particularly interesting species of this genus is the negative existential statement—statements that express the denial of their subjects' existence. As a result, the last two decades have seen the emergence of the history (or historiography) of analytic philosophy as an increasingly important sub-discipline within analytic philosophy itself. Nagel, Ernest. The Renaissance in History Because analytic philosophy initially saw itself as superseding traditional philosophy, its tendency throughout much of the twentieth century was to disregard the history of philosophy. Thus, as Russell observed in the introduction to the second edition of the Principia, "given all true atomic propositions, together with the fact that they are all, every other true proposition can theoretically be deduced by logical methods" (Russell 1925, xv). b. The logic of Principia Mathematica is entirely truth-functional; that is, it only allows for molecular propositions whose truth-values are determined by their atomic constituents. 1910-1913: Principia Mathematica 3 vols. Still, this should not be seen as in any way marginalizing Russell's significance for the system, which can be described as a metaphysics based on the assumption that an ideal language the likes of which was provided in Principia Mathematica is the key to reality. Cohen, L. First published in 1921, the Tractatus proved to be the most influential piece written on logical atomism. Grice, Paul. 1970: A Critique of Linguistic Philosophy, Oxford: Clarendon Press. This involved a lush metaphysical pluralism, the belief that there are many things that exist simpliciter. In the 1970s, direct reference theories came to dominate the philosophy of language. Secondary Sources Ayer, A.J. (ed) 1959: Logical Positivism, Westport: Greenwood Press, 1959. Since it does not refer to any "golden mountain," it does not need a Meinongian object to provide it with meaning. What is the case, the fact, is the existence of atomic facts. Additionally, Russell believed that the grammar of natural language often is philosophically misleading, and that the way to dispel the illusion is to re-express propositions in the ideal formal language of symbolic logic, thereby revealing their true logical form. 1959: My Philosophical Development, London: George Allen and Unwin; New York: Simon and Schuster. Coffa, J.A. 1991: The Semantic Tradition from Kant to Carnap, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Soames, Scott. Prosch, Harry. Secondary Sources Canfield, J.V. (ed) 1986: The Philosophy of Wittgenstein, New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc. Despite the strong connection to Oxford, Wittgenstein is usually taken to be the most important of the ordinary-language philosophers. 1918-19: "The Philosophy of Logical Atomism," The Monist 28:495-527 and 29:33-63, 190-222, 344-80; reprinted La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1985. The Later Wittgenstein While logical positivism was busy crumbling under the weight of self-referential incoherence, a larger problem was brewing for ideal-language philosophy in general. Before we discuss this directly, however, we must say a word about Gottlob Frege. 1997: The Rise of Analytic Philosophy, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers. Geach and M. And it says that they do so stand." In the introduction to the Tractatus, Wittgenstein indicates that his overarching purpose is to set the criteria and limits of meaningful saying. The theory of descriptions appears in Russell's 1905 essay, "On Denoting," which has become a central text in the analytic canon. Thomas Baldwin, London: Routledge. 1879: Concept Script, a formal language of pure thought modeled upon that of arithmetic, tr. Second, though strong similarities with the Austro-German view, it is clear that, in Moore's early thought, "propositions" and "meanings" are primarily neither ideal nor mental nor linguistic, but real in the sense of "thing-like." For Moore and the early Russell, propositions or meanings were "identical" to ordinary objects—tables, cats, people. (For more on the development of logic in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, see the article on Propositional Logic, especially Section 2). Whether or not this qualifies him as a founder of analytic philosophy depends on the extent to which we see the analytic movement as born of a desire for metaphilosophical revolution on the grand scale. Proposition 7, which stands on its own, is the culmination of a series of observations made throughout the Tractatus, and especially in the elaborations of proposition 6. This reductionist project was taken up by several members of the Vienna Circle, but none took it so far as did Rudolph Carnap, in his The Logical Structure of the World (1928) and in subsequent work. Each of these categories will be explained briefly prior to addressing Quine's critique of this "dogma" (for a more extensive treatment see the article on A Priori and A Posteriori). Analytic philosophy underwent several internal micro-revolutions that divide its history into five phases. It is characterized by the quasi-Platonic form of realism initially endorsed by Moore and Russell as an alternative to Idealism. Baker, G. P. All this has served to undermine received views and to open a debate concerning the true nature of analytic philosophy and the full scope of its history. 11, La Salle: Open Court. More complex propositions representing more complex facts are called molecular propositions and molecular facts. The propositions are made by linking atomic propositions together with truth-functional connectives, such as "and," "or" and "not." A truth-functional connective is one that combines constituent propositions in such a way that their truth-values (that is, their respective statuses as true or false) completely determine the truth value of the resulting molecular proposition. The thought is the significant proposition. For this reason analytic philosophy is reputed to have originated in a philosophical revolution on the grand scale—not merely in a revolt against British Idealism, but against traditional philosophy on the whole. 100, No. 1, 35-52. By 1910, both Moore and Russell had abandoned their propositional realism—Moore in favor of a realistic philosophy of common sense, Russell in favor of a view he developed with Ludwig Wittgenstein called logical atomism. 1959: Philosophical Papers, London: George Allen and Unwin. The 1960s and After: The Era of Eclecticism a. Schlipp, P.A. 1992: The Philosophy of A. S. 1905: "On Denoting," Mind 14: 479-93. Among its most prominent members were Schlick himself, Otto Neurath, Herbert Feigl, Freidrich Waismann, and perhaps most prominent of all, Rudolph Carnap. The only thing that exists simpliciter is the whole—the entire network of necessarily related objects. He concluded that, far from being a truth-functional calculus, language has no universally correct structure—that is, there is no such thing as an ideal language. Consequently, it renders itself meaningless. 1975: The Analytic Tradition in Philosophy: Background and Issues, Chicago: American Library Association. 2004: "A Note from Inside the Teapot," in Teaching New Histories of Philosophy, Princeton: Princeton University Center for Human Values. This terminology is further ambiguous in Moore's case, for two reasons. However, his new understanding of language required a new understanding of analysis. The fourth phase, approximately 1945-1965, is characterized by the turn to ordinary-language analysis, developed in various ways by the Cambridge philosophers Ludwig Wittgenstein and John Wisdom, and the Oxford philosophers Gilbert Ryle, John Austin, Peter Strawson, and Paul Grice. Over time, the list has expanded to include aesthetics, social and political philosophy, feminist philosophy, the philosophy of religion, philosophy of law, cognitive science, and the history of philosophy. On the other hand, many, including Bertrand Russell, saw the ordinary-language approach as falling far short of serious, philosophical work. Beaney, Michael. 1996: Bertrand Russell and the Origins of Analytical Philosophy, Bristol: Thoemmes Press. Instead, every object exists and is what it is at least partly in virtue of the relations it bears to other things—more precisely, to all other things. Moore reads the slogan as a definition or, as he would later call it, an analysis: just as we say "bachelor" means "unmarried man," so the Idealist says "to exist" means "to be cognized." However, if these bits of language had the same meaning, Moore argues, it would be superfluous to assert that they were identical, just as it is superfluous to say "a bachelor is a bachelor." The fact that the Idealist sees some need to assert the formula reveals that there is a difference in meanings of "to be" and "to be perceived," and hence a difference in the corresponding phenomena as well. Such propositions are not merely senseless, they are nonsense. There is no manageable set of observations that will verify a total theory or any of its constitutive claims once and for all. Pears, D.F. 1967: Bertrand Russell and the British Tradition in Philosophy, London: Collins. On the assumptions that meaning is fundamentally linguistic and that language is a conventional symbol-system in which the symbols are assigned meanings by fiat, one can explain synonymy without referring to anything beyond the realm of time, space and the senses. Such are the utterances of traditional, metaphysical philosophy. Black (eds.), Oxford: Blackwell, 3rd ed., 1980. For example, when we say "The golden mountain does not exist," we seem to refer to a golden

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