Section I.

John Adams, a leader of the 18th century American rebellion against a tyrannical English Crown and an unrepresentative Parliament, and the second President of the United States, once remarked that he was a politician so that his sons could be philosophers and his grandsons poets and painters. His son John Quincy Adams could have been a better philosopher than a politician or President, and Henry Adams wrote one of the classics of American literature The Education of Henry Adams (1907). John Russell, the great 19th century Whig politician, twice Prime Minister of Queen Victoria, and the author of the Reform Act of 1832, which transformed English politics by making Parliament more representative, produced a son Viscount Amberley, more philosopher than politician, who chose as godfather to his own son the philosopher John Stuart Mill, the godson -- Bertrand Arthur William Russell – himself becoming one of the great philosophers of the 20th century. Mill’s empiricism dominated English philosophy in the middle of the 19th century through the influence of System of Logic (1843) and Examination of Sir William Hamilton’s Philosophy (1865), the first example of what W.V.O. Quine later called “naturalized epistemology.” There is a clear lineage in European, British, and American empiricism, from Mill to Russell to Wittgenstein and Carnap to Quine (and his colleagues Nelson Goodman and Morton White, the latter representing a distinctive Deweyan and Tarskian variant of the empiricist tradition) and then to Davidson. But the lineage is not historically linear. Sandwiched between Mill and Russell lies the reaction to Millian empiricism that was British Idealism of the late 19th century, a tradition from Spinoza to Kant to Schelling (and the English poets Shelley, Coleridge, and Wordsworth) to Hegel to T.H. Green, who prepared the way for F.H.
Bradley and his Cambridge ally J.M.E. McTaggart, who taught Hegel to Bertrand Russell when Russell was an undergraduate at Trinity College, Cambridge, 1890--1894.

T.H. Green’s (b.1836, d.1882) famous introduction to his and T.H. Grose’s edition of Hume’s works not only began the British Idealists’ critique of Humean – and Millian -- empiricism, but Green created a historiography of modern philosophy that was an unfolding dialectic: there were the theses of the Rationalists (Descartes, Leibniz, Spinoza) reacted to in the anti-theses of the Empiricists (Locke, Berkeley, Hume); these theses and antitheses were then synthesized in Kant’s transcendental idealism and made self-conscious by Hegel’s absolute idealism, culminating in the absolute idealism of T.H. Green. Our undergraduate curriculum in philosophy, when it includes courses labeled “The Rationalists” and “The Empiricists,” still reflects T.H. Green’s 19th century Oxford historiography of modern philosophy. In the second volume The Age of Meaning of Philosophical Analysis in the Twentieth Century (Princeton University Press, 2003) Scott Soames offers a historiography of his own. He selects for discussion the views of the later Wittgenstein, of the Oxford ordinary language philosophers and American fellow-traveler Normal Malcolm: Gilbert Ryle, Sir Peter Strawson, R.M. Hare, Norman Malcolm, J.L. Austin; of the Oxford critic of the excesses of ordinary language philosophy H. Paul Grice; of W.V.O. Quine; of Donald Davidson; and of Saul Kripke. In this account there are two and a half heroes: Paul Grice and Saul Kripke, from whose philosophical perspectives Soames assesses the views and arguments of the rest, and Donald Davidson, whose emphasis on a Tarskian theory of truth as a theory of meaning is considered an advance on Quine and on the unsystematic character of Wittgenstein and of Oxford ordinary language philosophy, despite the failure of Davidson’s positive claims. This is Whig, i.e. retrospective, history of philosophy, since the weaknesses of the views of the philosophers discussed are often framed as failures to appreciate distinctions or doctrines or methods of Grice and Kripke. Like T.H. Green before him, Soames looks back at these influential figures from the perspectives of his own Kant, viz. Grice, and, more importantly, his own Hegel, viz. Kripke. Like T.H. Green also, Soames takes for granted a special group of notions, what Quine called the “ideology” of a theory, the concepts central to the articulation of the theory’s principles, which in Soames’s case are those of: truth-conditions, conversational implicatures, “ordinary” senses, “ordinary” references, the “ordinary” notion of truth [pp. 280-1], physical truths (facts) [pp. 246-7, 251], propositions [pp. 279-80, 329, 337-8, 373, 384, 386-7, 393-4], the “ordinary” notion of essential property [pp. 347, 350-3, 376-7], “ordinary” counterfactual talk [pp. 352-3], and “part of a meaning” [pp. 357-8, 368].

Section II.

It is useful to contrast this historiography with that of Richard Rorty’s Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979) of nearly twenty-five years ago. Among analytical philosophers who play the role of intellectual heroes in that book, two stand out: Quine, who undermined the Kantian analytic/synthetic distinction and the a priori a posteriori knowledge distinction on which two hundred years of epistemology relied in formulating its questions, and Wilfrid Sellars, who demonstrated the Myth of the Given, the other foundation on which the epistemological problems of modern philosophy rested. In Rorty’s view, 20th century analytical
philosophy achieved a stunningly important result: putting to rest the 18th–20th centuries’ epistemological difficulties (skepticism about our knowledge of an external world, understanding how sensory evidence can and cannot warrant beliefs) in just the way that Wittgenstein and Heidegger would have approved, by dissolving rather than solving the problems.

In Chapter Sixteen of Soames’s Volume 1, Soames discusses Quine’s attack on the analytic/synthetic distinction and, as he notes again in this volume (p. 224), he believes that Quine’s arguments fail. In fact he uses against Quine the form of argument that he reports (p. 225) Grice and Strawson have used against Quine’s “Two Dogmas of Empiricism” in their well-known “In Defense of a Dogma,” *Philosophical Review* 65 (1956). Soames (p. 280) uses the same form of argument to show that Quine’s position must be eliminativist about “ordinary” notions of sense, reference, and truth of sentences or utterances. From Soames’s discussion (p. 225) of Quine’s *Word and Object* (1960), one would not suspect that Quine had addressed precisely Grice and Strawson’s form of argument, which Quine believed suffered the logical defect of The Fallacy of Subtraction (Quine 1960: 206-11), and that Quine’s objection applies to Soames’s reductio ad absurdum argument against Quine, which imputes to Quine a radical eliminativism of our “ordinary” notions (p. 280), as well as to Grice and Strawson’s original argument. The achievement that for Rorty made Quine a Hegelian world-historical figure is, it turns out, no achievement at all; its weaknesses were already exposed by the heroic Grice and his student Strawson in 1956. So, are we to be returned to the Cave of 18th century epistemology? No, I think not, if we, like Soames and Kripke, separate the analytic from the a priori.

It is easy to see why the Quine of the late 1940’s and early 1950’s would have oscillated back and forth in his talk of ‘analytic’ and ‘a priori’, the first a semantic term, the second an epistemic one. After all, it is a self-conscious, logical empiricist tenet that sentences known a priori are just those that are analytically true. The careful distinctions among ‘necessary’, ‘a priori’, and ‘analytic’ that we associate with Kripke’s *Naming and Necessity* (1972/1980) were not introduced into analytical philosophy by Kripke, though he certainly made philosophers aware of their importance by the remarkable use he made of the contingent a priori and related notions. The basic distinctions, contrary to logical empiricist conflations, had already received serious discussion by Morton G. White in his *Toward Reunion in Philosophy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956: 10, 13, 20-21, 35ff, 105, 114ff, 118ff, 122ff, 132, 137ff, 149, 191ff) and were well-known to Stanley Cavell and Burton Dreben, who were graduate student Teaching Assistants in the Harvard course in which White lectured on this material prior to publication of the book in 1956. In fact, the attack on the analytic/synthetic and a priori a posteriori that we associate with Quine’s “Two Dogmas of Empiricism,” *Philosophical Review* 60 (1951), was preceded by White’s “The Analytic and the Synthetic: an Untenable Dualism,” in S. Hook (ed.), *John Dewey: Philosopher of Science and Freedom*, New York: Dial Press, 1950, pp. 316-30, and reprinted in a famous anthology in philosophy of language of the period, Leonard Linsky’s (ed.), *Semantics and the Philosophy of Language*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1952, pp. 272-86. The version of “Two Dogmas” first published by Quine in *Philosophical Review* 60 (1951) contains in the first-page, “acknowledgment” footnote an appropriate acknowledgment of his Harvard colleague White’s prior published discussion and the importance of White’s arguments, especially
the “two sides of a dubious coin” argument mentioned and footnoted in the first paragraph of Section 1, to the development of Quine’s view, two footnotes omitted from the version reprinted in the first edition of From a Logical Point of View in 1953 and from all subsequent editions. In the Preface to From a Logical Point of View, Quine does acknowledge the stimulus of discussions with White and Goodman, as well as Carnap, Tarski, and Church, dating from 1939, but he fails to mention the proximate intellectual origins of the attack on the analytic/synthetic in the summer of 1947, which is found in the “Appendix: Nelson Goodman, W.V. Quine, and Morton White: a Triangular Correspondence in 1947”, pp. 337-57, of Morton White, A Philosopher’s Story (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999). The three-way discussion of the arguments that led to “Two Dogmas” began with a letter of Morton White’s to Quine, which included the manuscript of White’s paper “On the Church-Frege Solution of the Paradox of Analysis,” Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, 9: 305-8, December 1948, reprinted with a Postscript in Morton White, From a Philosophical Point of View: Selected Studies (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), pp. 112-15.

In his Word and Object (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1960), pp. 258-9, Quine asks ‘[W]hat [are we] most typically up to when in a philosophical spirit we offer an “analysis” or “explication” of some hitherto inadequately formulated “idea” or expression[?]’ As an elegant example he offers the way in which ordered pairs in mathematics are treated as objects, as values of individual variables of quantification. In order to explain relations, and to quantify over them, viz. over classes of ordered-pairs, one needs ordered-pairs as objects. Yet in a set theory in which individuals, sets of individuals, etc. are objects, and relations are classes of ordered-pairs, etc., one does not welcome as an additional category of object ordered n-tuples of objects. One early solution, that of Norbert Wiener in 1914, is to identify the pair \(<x,y>\) with the class \({\{x\},\{y,\emptyset\}}\), whose members are the class \(\{x\}\), whose sole member is \(x\), and the class \(\{y,\emptyset\}\), whose members are \(y\) and the empty class \(\emptyset\). This construction satisfies the single axiom governing the identity conditions for an ordered-pair: (1) if \(<x,y> = <z,w>\), then \(x = z\) and \(y = w\). It is, he remarks, “paradigmatic of what we are most typically up to… We do not claim synonymy. We do not claim to make clear and explicit what the users of the unclear expression had unconsciously in mind all along. We do not expose hidden meanings, as the words ‘analysis’ and ‘explication’ might suggest; we supply lacks. We fix on the particular functions of the unclear expression that make it worth troubling about, and then devise a substitute, clear and couched in terms to our liking, that fills those functions. Beyond those conditions of partial agreement, dictated by our interests and purposes, any traits of the explications come under the head of “don’t cares.” Under this head we are free to allow the explicans all manner of novel connotations never associated with the explicandum. This point is strikingly illustrated by Wiener’s \({\{x\},\{y,\emptyset\}}\). Our example is atypical in just one respect: the demands of partial agreement are preternaturally succinct and explicit, in (1) [my emphasis].”

Quine (op.cit. p. 259) also anticipates a familiar line of objection to such explications. He writes that the “notion that analysis must consist somehow in the uncovering of hidden meanings underlies also the recent tendency of some of the Oxford philosophers to take as their business an examination of the subtle irregularities of ordinary language. And there is no mistaking the obliviousness of various writers to the
point about the don’t-cares. If nobody has objected to Wiener’s definition as falsifying the ordinary notion of ordered pair, e.g. in that it makes x and y members of members of \(<x,y>\), the reason is perhaps that here the relevant considerations are so clearly on view; or perhaps only that ‘ordered pair’ is not ordinary language. Analogous objections to other and more classical philosophical analyses, at any rate, are not wanting. Russell’s theory of descriptions has been called wrong because of what it does to the truth-value gaps [my emphasis].” I shall return to the notion – ordinary or not -- of “ordinary notion.”

In light of this paradigmatic example, he mentions that “Philosophical analysis, explication, has not always been seen in this way. [And here he mentions the admirable exception of Carnap in Meaning and Necessity, Second Edition, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956).] Only the reading of a synonymy claim into analysis could engender the so-called paradox of analysis, which runs thus: how can a correct analysis be informative, since to understand it we must already know the meanings of its terms, and hence already know that the terms which it equates are synonymous?” [Here he refers the reader to the essay by Morton White that I mentioned above.]

Section III.

It is not surprising that the Paradox of Analysis should have led Morton White to such a profound reconsideration of the notions of meaning and synonymy in 1947. It remains a deep source of philosophical interest to this day. In fact, one of the most interesting parts of Soames’s Chapter 9 on Paul Grice, in the Section “Puzzles and Unresolved Problems,” pp. 210-14, is devoted to exploring the philosophical consequences of a Gricean version of the Paradox of Analysis for a Gricean view of the relationship between literal meaning and conversational implicature (discussed by Grice in Studies in the Way of Words (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), p. 49, and quoted by Soames, p. 213).

The paradox is formulated in a passage from Grice’s “Further Notes on Logic and Conversation.” (Grice op.cit. p. 49) as follows:

We must of course give due (but not undue) weight to intuitions about the existence or nonexistence of putative senses of a word (how could we do without them?). Indeed if the scheme which I have been proposing is even proceeding in the right direction, at least some reliance must be placed on such intuitions. For in order that a nonconventional implicature should be present in a given case, my account requires that a speaker shall be able to utilize the conventional meaning of a sentence. If nonconventional implicature is built on what is said, if what is said is closely related to the conventional force of the words used, and if the presence of the implicature depends on the intentions of the speaker, or at least on his assumptions, with regard to the possibility of the nature of the implicature being worked out, then it would appear that the speaker must (in some sense or other of the word know) know what is the conventional force of the words which he is using. This indeed seems to lead to a sort of paradox: If we, as speakers, have the requisite knowledge of the conventional meaning of sentences we employ to implicate, when uttering them, something the implication of which depends on the conventional meaning in question, how can we, as theorists, have
difficulty with respect to just those cases in deciding where conventional meaning ends and implicature begins? If it is true, for example, that one who says that $A$ or $B$ implicates the existence of non-truth-functional grounds for $A$ or $B$, how can there be any doubt whether the word “or” has a strong or weak sense? I hope that I can provide the answer to this question, but I am not certain that I can.  

Soames responds to Grice’s paradox this way (p. 213-14):

How transparent does meaning have to be if Grice’s account of conversational implicature is to be correct? In addition, we may ask, is there room for some conception of implicature—perhaps different from Grice’s—in which there are theoretical reasons for distinguishing meaning from implicature, even though it is not assumed that speakers themselves, just by virtue of understanding their language, must possess the means for dividing the information conveyed by utterances into that due to meaning and that due to other things? I myself think there must be some important notion of implicature that fits this broader picture, since I don’t see how simply being a competent speaker could be enough to guarantee that one can always distinguish information conveyed due to implicature from information conveyed due to meaning. However, it must be admitted that our understanding of this issue, even today [2003] is fragmentary.

So the Paradox of Analysis, in variant forms, remains with us. In its classical form it touched off the debate among White, Quine, and Goodman that led to the attack on the analytic/synthetic. But, to return to my earlier question about the inescapability of epistemology, even if Quine’s arguments against the analytic/synthetic distinction fail, must we return to the epistemological questions of the last two hundred years? No, as I said. The best interpretation of this attack was, in my view, articulated by Hilary Putnam in “‘Two Dogmas’ Revisited” (see G. Ryle (ed.), Contemporary Aspects of Philosophy (Stocksfield: Oriel Press, 1976), pp. 202-13, reprinted in H. Putnam, Philosophical Papers Volume 3: Realism and Reason (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 87-97); Putnam treats Quine’s arguments as best understood as an attack on the epistemological distinction between $a$ priori and $a$ posteriori knowledge, not on the semantic distinction between analytic and synthetic sentences. In Toward Reunion in Philosophy (1956: 25) Morton White points out that it was James and Dewey who first clearly criticized G.E. Moore’s and B. Russell’s defense of the $a$ priori/$a$ posteriori knowledge distinction. This criticism by James, Dewey, White, and Putnam stands even if Quine’s arguments against the analytic/synthetic distinction are undermined by Soames’s criticism. The $a$ priori/$a$ posteriori knowledge distinction does not stand or fall with the analytic/synthetic distinction. Contrary to Michael Dummett’s suggestions in Frege: philosophy of language (London: Duckworth, 1973), one does not need philosophy of language as First Philosophy to criticize successfully the 18th century Kantian epistemological project.

Quine’s comments in Word and Object (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1960), pp. 257-66, on the complex relationship between explication and elimination should be kept in mind when assessing the consequences of White’s and Kripke’s separation of semantic analyticity from metaphysical necessity and epistemic $a$ prioricity. Had the logical
empiricists’ explication of necessity and *a prioricity* by analyticity succeeded, they could have eliminated necessity and *a prioricity* in favor of Hume’s “relations of ideas” – Kant’s analyticity. Even though on Quine’s view (WO, p. 260) *explication is elimination* . . . (but not all elimination is explication – see WO, p. 261), explication does not necessitate elimination; it is also a defense of domestication. If there is a “striking if partial parallelism of function between the old troublesome form of expression and some form of expression figuring in the new method . . . we are likely to view the latter form of expression as an explicans of the old, and, if it is longer, *even abbreviate it by the old word* [my emphasis; see WO, p. 261].” What was once inexplicable is now familiar; it is explicable and, though eliminable, no longer in need of elimination – it is just a sheep in wolf’s clothing. If Soames were right (even for the wrong reasons) that Quine fails to demolish the analytic/synthetic distinction, but the logical empiricists were wrong to try to reduce necessity and *a prioricity* to analyticity, necessity and *a prioricity* once again become independent notions, which become once again sources of philosophical puzzlement (different from the puzzlement of being analytic – true or false solely by virtue of meaning -- which was the puzzlement that disturbed White and Quine about the elimination strategy of the logical empiricists). Hence we could be forced back into the 18th century Cave of epistemology. So there had better be good arguments against the *a priori/a posteriori* knowledge distinction besides the attack on the analytic/synthetic distinction. And, of course, there are. That is what William James, Pierre Duhem, John Dewey, Bertrand Russell (of *Philosophical Essays* (1910)), Alfred Tarski, L. Wittgenstein (of *On Certainty* (1969)), Morton White (of *A Philosophy of Culture: the Scope of Holistic Pragmatism* (2002)), Hilary Putnam (of *Pragmatism* (1995)), and on Putnam’s view Quine, were up to.

Section IV.

Unlike Quine, Soames does not think that he is engaged in explication when he constructs a notion of “proposition.” As he notes (p. 393), his notion of ‘proposition’ is a “theoretical” one, but it corresponds to an “ordinary” one – “We acquire the [ordinary] concept of truth as [a] property applied to propositions – namely that which we assert and believe when we sincerely and assertively utter sentences (p. 329).” His propositions are what sentences “express” and what different sentences that “say” or “express” the same thing have in common (p. 373, 386-7). They are designated by the Noun clauses that are the syntactic objects of attitudinal verbs (p. 373). He often says, following his work of the late 1980’s on propositional attitudes, that propositions are the “semantic contents” of sentences (p. 389). He evinces some agnosticism about what entities propositions are (see A4, p. 373), but two pages later he is comfortably talking about world-states with respect to which propositions are true or false. Though he does not explicitly commit himself to propositions being sets of possible world-states, the careless reader might be forgiven for thinking it. He does give a gloss of what Kripke might have meant in *Naming and Necessity* by a possible state of the world. He adopts a view of Nathan Salmon’s that a possible state of the world is a maximally complete property that the universe could have instantiated, this property being an abstract object (p. 378). As a “throw away” line, he remarks that one can understand Kripke’s informative, necessary *a posteriori* truths, e.g. ‘Hesperus = Phosphorus’, as ones for which one needs empirical
evidence to come to know and as informative because they rule out metaphysically impossible (where Hesperus ≠ Phosphorus) but conceivable and epistemologically relevant world-states with respect to which the necessarily true propositions are false (p. 378). (I would gloss this last comment by: after all, the evening star might not have turned out to be the morning star.) This is a peculiar way to talk about necessarily true sentences, but since Soames has got instead necessarily true propositions that are informative, he thinks that he has to say something about the truth-value of the propositions that the sentences express with respect to impossible world-states. Soames is even willing to say that proper names and indexical noun phrases rigidly designate the same object with respect to all world-states, including the impossible ones (n.6, p. 379).

Quine, following Frege’s demand that there be clear identity conditions for entities admissible in one’s ontology, would have ruled out abstract entities like propositions and world-states and properties, but one can also imagine him saying to Soames, “If you’re going to admit impossible worlds, why not make the necessarily true propositions true with respect to them rather than false? Why isn’t any proposition true with respect to an impossible world? After all, these assignments of truth-values to a proposition with respect to an impossible world is what I [Quine] would call a ‘don’t care’ in my explications. At least keeping a necessarily true proposition (true with respect to all possible worlds) true even with respect to the impossible worlds would be a desideratum of theoretical smoothness. And aren’t your propositions just explications of an intuitive notion of the “meaning” of a sentence or of an utterance? They are not explications of which I approve, but explications they are. After all, you want to say, as Russell did in Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy, Chapter 16, in 1919, that ‘Scott = Scott’ expresses the same proposition as ‘Sir Walter = Scott’. So then an individual can understand two sentences that ‘semantically express’, as you would put it, the same proposition, but he or she does not know that the same proposition is expressed, and so one can explain why he or she might accept the first sentence and yet not accept the second (p. 386). Your notion of a semantic content or proposition is just as artificial an explication of meaning as my stimulus-meaning is, but it is not its artificiality that I object to. It’s your saying that your propositions, as objects of belief, constitute a ‘modest theoretical apparatus’ (p. 384). Modest for what purpose or for whom? Impossible worlds don’t seem ‘modest’ theoretical entities to me, nor does the claim that ‘Hesperus’ rigidly designates Venus in all worlds, possible or impossible. By the way, how many impossible worlds are there? How do you distinguish them?”

Quine has a point. Soames is enough of a realist about possible worlds to say things like, “We might try to specify possible world-states in which Nixon has a certain property P, but fail to do so because, in fact, Nixon couldn’t have had that property. For example, we can’t successfully stipulate a possible situation in which Nixon is an inanimate object. In this sort of case there is no such possible world-state corresponding to our specification. … [F]acts about possibility are not created or determined by our stipulation (p. 356).” Well, gee, how about a dead Nixon lying on the mortuary table just minutes after his brain activity ceases? Nixon is an inanimate object, right? Or suppose that Pat, Julie, Tricia, and David had decided, just after Air Force Minus One had landed in San Clemente after the trip from Washington, D.C. on 8 August 1974, to cryogenically freeze Nixon. Nixon would be an inanimate object, right?  

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For Soames an essential property of an object “is a property the object could not lack in any circumstance in which it existed at all. … Uncontroversial examples of essential properties of mine are rarer [than contingent properties], but the following seem to be good candidates: the property of being a human being, the property of having a brain, the property of having a body made up of molecules, the property of being mortal, the property of not being identical with Saul Kripke (p. 347).” Somewhere Wittgenstein asks: were we to open an ordinary, functioning man’s skull and discover that it was empty, what would be the consequence for our conceptions of human thought and action? And he answers that there would be none. So at least for Wittgenstein, the property of having a brain is not a likely candidate for an essential property of a thinking human being. (There’s always the stomach, the liver, or the heart, depending on the century you’re in.) Why, then, is Soames tempted to think that the property expressed by the predicate ‘having a brain’ is an essential property of a human being? Wittgenstein remarks (Zettel 605), “One of the most dangerous of ideas for a philosopher is, oddly enough, that we think with our heads or in our heads.” Soames believes that the distinction between contingent and essential properties is an “intuitive” one, one that “we all recognize the intelligibility of … (p. 350)”. For Soames it is “intuitive” that ‘being raised in Seattle’ is a contingent property of himself, by contrast with ‘being a sentient creature’. We have a “pre-philosophical conviction that essentialist claims are intelligible… (p. 351); “we begin with an intuitive distinction” between properties (p. 350). Quine is skeptical about the intelligibility of this distinction between properties (WO, p.199). Soames takes Quine’s objections to hinge on the existence of rigid designators (p. 347).

Quine (WO, pp. 197-8) objects to quantification into modal contexts unless the variables are so interpreted so that no open sentence ‘Fx’ is such that (x)(y)(x = y → (□Fx & ¬□Fy)). Equivalently, the variables are interpreted so that every ‘F’ is such that (x)(y)(x = y → (□Fx → □Fy). The trouble is that Quine then characterizes this modest condition as requiring that for any ‘F’ and ‘G’ such that for some a, {a} = {x : Fx} = {x : Gx }, i.e. both ‘F’ and ‘G’ specify the same object, □(z)(Fz ↔ Gz), i.e. the predicates are necessarily equivalent. From this latter condition he readily deduces an absurdity for ‘Fx ’=df ‘(P and x = a )’ , where P is an arbitrary, true but not necessarily true, sentence, and ‘Gx’=df ‘(x = a)’; he deduces the conclusion that □P. His claim is then that any quantified modal logic must presuppose his latter condition and so cause modal distinctions among sentences to collapse. The unacceptable alternative is to specify an object by predicates that are either contingent or necessary. Then his objection (WO, pp. 199) is that he cannot make sense of the distinction between attributes that are essential and those that are accidental. The “argument” is the case of the cycling mathematician.

If mathematicians are necessarily rational but not necessarily two-legged, and cyclists are necessarily two-legged but not necessarily rational, Quine asks whether the individual is necessarily rational and contingently two-legged, or is he contingently rational and necessarily two-legged. Really, Quine just does not think this Platonic/Aristotelian distinction makes any philosophical or scientific sense. One might have just shot back that Quine’s question implies that the cycling mathematician is both contingently rational and contingently two-legged, but his prior assumption about mathematicians and cyclists implies that either it’s not the case that mathematicians are necessarily rational or it’s not the case that cyclists are necessarily two-legged (or both).
So the premises of his example cannot both be true, or the individual is contingently rational and contingently two-legged. In either case his example creates no puzzle.

The problem is that none of Quine’s concerns in *Word and Object* is directed to the problem of rigid designators. Quine’s problem is not even rigid predicates (see note 7). Quine’s problem, if there is one, is his view that the semantics of modal logic makes a special class of equivalent predicates necessarily equivalent. It is the analogous principle to Quine’s for equivalent singleton predicates that Kripke accepts for the identity expressed by individual variables, viz. that if \( x = y \) then \( \square x = y \). But, as Bishop Butler would have said, equivalence of predicates is not the identity of individuals. The semantic issues are not the same. If there is direct conflict between Quine and Kripke, it is on matters of essence and accident, not on matters of rigid designation.\(^8\) Neither Kripke nor Quine has offered a demonstration or a refutation of the acceptability or even plausibility of essential properties that settles the metaphysical issue. Quine’s objections are intuitive, with a tacit appeal to the claim that no contemporary scientific theory needs any metaphysical machinery borrowed from Aristotle. Soames’s (p. 350) defense of Kripke is an intuitive appeal to a list of two essential attributes of Scott Soames that “everyone” understands – everyone except Wittgenstein and Albritton, at least: being a sentient being and not being identical to Saul Kripke. I am dubious of the necessity of the first (may Descartes and Locke forgive me), as I have suggested above in the case of Nixon, and I am dubious of the physical properties that Soames also uses as examples (p. 347), viz. being molecular and being mortal. Were I immortal, would I not be me? Would I not exist? Surely, if the test is the view of the “ordinary person,” the answer is ‘no; I’m still me’. (Note: Soames did not ask the theological question whether immortality were a necessary property of my soul.) And if my body were not molecular, well, it would have to be something else, e.g. the tiniest, 10-dimensional superstrings, or maybe just *pneuma*, or bits of F.H. Bradley’s Absolute, or a mode of Spinoza’s God (i.e. Nature). The second example of non-identity is a logical property of Soames that does not have much metaphysical force.

But the merits of the case aside, what I find most arresting – some might say “startling” -- about Soames’s views is his appeal to intuition, to “what everyone understands,” to the claim that what he is saying is just the Ordinary View of the man on the Clapham omnibus. As far as intuition goes, Soames’s appeal to “what everyone understands” about essential predications and Quine’s appeal to “what every scientist understands” about the scientific irrelevance of the essence/accident distinction are equally matters of claims for intuition rather than knock-down arguments in their writings on this subject. Still, Quine has a chance of substantiating his claim, by examining the character of scientific theory and practice. On its face Quine’s claim seems right. The question for him is always the later one: how shall the construction of a metaphysics be guided by scientific theory, and why should it be? On its face Soames’s claim does not seem right, despite the passages from Kripke’s *Naming and Necessity* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1980, pp. 41-2) that he quotes in support of it. For the question is whether Kripke and Soames are arguing for the same claim, and, if they are, whether what is intuitive about their claims shows what they think it shows about the intuitiveness of necessary, essential properties. So I shall discuss briefly the famous passage from Kripke, quoted by Soames (pp. 352-3), in defense of the intuitiveness of essence.
Section V.

The crucial passages from Kripke (Naming and Necessity (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1980, pp. 41-2) are these:

…it is very far from being true that this idea [that a property can meaningfully be held to be essential or accidental to an object independently of its description] is a notion which has no intuitive content, which means nothing to the ordinary man. Suppose that someone said, pointing to Nixon, ‘That’s the guy who might have lost’. Someone else says ‘Oh no, if you describe him as “Nixon”, then he might have lost; but, of course, describing him as the winner, then it is not true that he might have lost’. Now which one is being the philosopher, here, the unintuitive man? It seems to me obviously to be the second. The second man has a philosophical theory. The first man would say, and with great conviction, ‘Well, of course the winner of the election might have been someone else’ [sic]. The actual winner, had the course of the campaign been different, might have been the loser, and someone else the winner; or there might have been no election at all. So, such terms as “the winner” and “the loser” don’t designate the same objects in all possible worlds. On the other hand, the term “Nixon” is just a name of this man. When you ask whether it is necessary or contingent that Nixon won the election, you are asking the intuitive question whether in some counterfactual situation, this man would in fact have lost the election. If someone thinks that the notion of a necessary or contingent property (forget whether there are any nontrivial necessary properties [and consider] just the meaningfulness of the notion) is a philosopher’s notion with no intuitive content, he is wrong.

I want to focus on just one remark of Kripke’s:

When you ask whether it is necessary or contingent that Nixon won the election, you are asking the intuitive question whether in some counterfactual situation, this man would in fact have lost the election.

There is a natural, ordinary language paraphrase of Kripke’s use of the modal ‘would’ in ‘This man would have lost the election (in some possible but non-actual situation)’, which is ‘It was possible for this man to have lost the election’. In Kripke’s ‘would’ sentence and in the ‘possible for’ paraphrase, the referring term ‘this man’ is syntactically placed so that it has an obvious referential interpretation (a transparent occurrence, in Quine’s language). Though in logical syntax it is possible to use Peano-abstraction to create a predicate, re-casting ‘It is necessary that Fa’ as the Peano-English sentence ‘a is such that it is necessary that it is F’, in ordinary English neither of the ordinary ‘would’ or ‘it is possible for’ sentences are paraphrasable by a ‘possible that’ sentence ‘*It was possible that this man did/does lose the election’ – the verb tenses are grammatically wrong. There is a related ‘possible that’ sentence in English that is grammatical: ‘It is possible that this man did lose/lost the election’, but this use of the English word ‘possible’ in this ‘possible that’ sentence is only paraphrasable by a ‘not certain that’ sentence ‘It is not certain that this man did not lose the election’; ‘not
certain’ does not give the meaning intended. So, contrary to Kripke’s claim, the ‘would’ or ‘possible for’ sentence in which ‘this man’ occurs transparently, viz. ‘It was possible for this man to have lost the election’, does not paraphrase the ‘possible that’ sentence ‘It is possible that this man did lose/lost the election’. Thus the negative sentence ‘It was not possible for this man to have lost the election’ does not paraphrase the negative sentence ‘It is not possible that this man did lose/lost the election’. So, assuming that ties in elections are not possible, Kripke’s original sentence ‘It is necessary that this man won the election’ is not paraphrasable by ‘It was necessary for this man to have won the election’, i.e. in no possible situation, counterfactual or otherwise, would this man have lost the election. But that is just to say that the ‘that’ sentence ‘It is necessary that Proper Name/Demonstrative N is F’ does not have the paraphrase in ordinary English that would express the de re interpretation in which the Proper Name or Demonstrative term occurs transparently, hence in which the referent of the Proper Name possesses F-ness necessarily. Thus Kripke’s claim that there is a natural, ordinary paraphrase by a ‘would’ or by a ‘possible for’ sentence, in which a referring term occurs transparently, of a ‘necessary that’ sentence is just a linguistic falsehood; it hardly suffices as a defense of the intuitiveness of an essentialist, de re interpretation of ‘necessary that’ sentences like ‘It is necessary that Proper Name is F’ that he makes in the quoted remark, the evidence for which is an allegedly correct but actually incorrect, ordinary English paraphrase of ‘necessary that’ using ‘would’. This is not to deny that in logical syntax one can use Peano-abstraction and give the appropriate model theory. It is to say that a defense of the intuitiveness of predicating necessary properties of an individual by appeal to the naturalness and linguistic obviousness of ordinary paraphrases of ‘necessary that’ sentences by ‘would’ sentences in which a singular term occurs transparently depends on whether there is such a paraphrase. In Kripke’s case, there is no such ordinary, intuitive paraphrase.10

Kripke’s language here is, in any case, different from his report of the ordinary man, who said ‘That’s the guy who might have lost the election’. This special use of ‘might’, the past of ‘may’, indicates a possibility just as ‘could have’ does. What Kripke’s ordinary guy cannot felicitously assert is ‘That’s the guy who may have lost the election – but he didn’t’. What Kripke should have said, less misleadingly, is that the ordinary guy says, ‘That’s the guy who could have lost the election,’ paraphrasable by ‘It was possible for that guy to have lost the election’ or by ‘It would have been possible for that guy to lose the election’, as discussed above. And as above, the evaluation of ‘could have’ statements is not restricted to counterfactual situations. (For further interesting discussion, see Alan R. White, Modal Thinking (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1975).)

Now to think that Kripke can get from the incorrect linguistic evidence for the intuitiveness and correctness of ‘It is necessary that P’ and ‘It is possible/contingent that P’ to express necessity or possibility predicates in English to the truth of his next sentence stretches credulity beyond the breaking point:

If someone thinks that the notion of a necessary or contingent property … is a philosopher’s notion with no intuitive content, he is wrong. …[P]eople who think the notion of accidental property unintuitive have intuition reversed, I think.
Property? And necessary and contingent ones, at that? The incorrect linguistic judgments supporting Kripke’s previous remark are now supposed to defend the intuitiveness of the concept of a necessary property? Really? The sentence ‘It was possible for this man to have lost the election’ – not, notice, ‘It is possible that this man…’ – is supposed to justify intuitively the ascription to this man of the property expressed by ‘is such that x possibly has lost the election’, or the ungrammatical ‘*is to have possibly lost the election’ when concatenated with ‘this man’? The former, grammatical expression does not paraphrase the original sentence ‘It was possible for … to have…’, and the latter expression, since it is ungrammatical, is hopeless as a paraphrase. Are these the “ordinary meanings” of “ordinary language” that make the “ordinary person” an intuitive understander of necessary and contingent properties? I think not.

Having examined the inadequate linguistics of Kripke’s argument, I have newly found sympathy for sentiments expressed by Hilary Putnam (Renewing Philosophy (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1992, pp. 138-9), who addresses David Lewis’s argument to show that “way the world could have been” if a property of the entire world would imply, e.g., that the world is one in which the Eiffel tower is five hundred feet tall, in which case the first property would “entail” the second; but if properties are distinct “simples” how could such an entailment relation even be intelligible?; for one would have to think of properties as “complexes”, and how could they be complexes?; what would they be complexes of? Putnam writes:

In spite of Peirce’s attacks on the method of What is Agreeable to Reason, I might be willing to listen to this sort of argument [of David Lewis’s] if I had the slightest idea of what these intuitions of Lewis’s are supposed to be, or why we should trust their deliverances…, or what the significance is of the fact that something appears “intuitive” and something else appears “unintelligible.”

The alleged evidence of “ordinary language” that Kripke offers in support of an “ordinary person’s” intuitive conception of modal properties is thoroughly inadequate as linguistic argumentation. Alternatively you might as well adopt Descartes’s strategy of appealing to Clear and Distinct Ideas that God’s beneficence makes error-proof and postulate that the ideas of necessary and contingent properties are Clear and Distinct and be done with it. Some philosophers might enjoy spending the 21st century doing 17th century philosophy. After all, it might be the 17th century.

I asked above the question whether Kripke and Soames are arguing for the same claim, and, if they are, whether what is intuitive about their claims shows what they think it shows about the intuitiveness of necessary, essential properties. I shall merely assume that Soames agrees with Kripke’s formulation of the problem of showing the intuitiveness of necessary and contingent properties. I think it clear from linguistic considerations that Kripke’s claims do not show what he thinks they do about the ordinary intuitions about essences of the man on the Clapham omnibus.

Section VI.
Besides Quine, the other of Rorty’s world-historical analytical philosophers was Wilfrid Sellars, because he demonstrated the mistaken foundationalism in accounts of perceptual knowledge from the 17th through the 20th centuries. Sellars gets no mention by Soames, but J.L. Austin’s *Sense and Sensibilia* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1964) does. Soames’s discussion and criticism in Chapter Eight of Austin’s arguments, in the Section *The Argument that Knowledge of the World Does Not Always Require Evidence*, and his defense of A.J. Ayer by appeal to Paul Grice’s notion of conversational implicature, as well as his discussion *Appearance Statements: Austin’s Criticism of the Sense Data Theory*, seem to me exemplary. The Section *The Argument that Appearance Statements Conceptually Depend on the Truth of Non-Appearance Statements* seems to me incorrectly to conflate Austin’s views with Norman Malcolm’s paradigm case argument, but later in the Section, though Soames fails to appreciate the way in which Austin is anticipating Quine’s notion of an observation sentence (p. 191), he does conclude in agreement with Austin “that our most basic perceptual beliefs about material objects are *prima facie* justified by the very perceptions they arise from (p. 192).” The consequence for skepticism is that the skeptic “is now properly viewed as facing an enormously daunting task. In order to establish his conclusion that none of our perceptual beliefs about material objects are known or justified, he must provide a positive reason for taking them all to be false. For this, it is not enough to point out the mere possibility that appearances could remain as they are, even if no material objects were being perceived (p. 192).”

This is a powerful, if familiar, anti-skeptical conclusion11, derived from a way of interpreting Austin’s account of perception and couched in a modest Austinian rhetoric, which follows the lines, to which Soames appeals, of Jim Pryor’s “The Skeptic and the Dogmatist,” *Noûs* 34 (2000): 517-49.

Section VII.

If we compare Soames’s historiography with Rorty’s, something like Quine’s attack on the analytic/synthetic and Sellars’s attack on the Given reappears. Using Kripke to separate the issue of the analytic/synthetic from that of *a priori/a posteriori* knowledge, and using Grice to separate the wheat from the chaff in Austin’s attack on A.J. Ayer’s foundationalist theory of empirical knowledge, Soames makes it possible to refocus on some new heroes, unmentioned by him, but shown by his views to be subjects for a new history: the attack on the *a priori/a posteriori* to be found in William James, John Dewey, Pierre Duhem, Quine as interpreted by Hilary Putnam, in Morton White, in the very late Wittgenstein, in Alfred Tarski, and in Putnam himself. Soames’s emphasis on the Paradigm Case Argument gives way to his focus on the Paradox of Analysis. And the materials for a revised historical account of the theory of perception is seen to be first brought to philosophical awareness by J.L. Austin and Quine on observation sentences.

Where Rorty took Sellars to have dismissed the source of skeptical arguments against empirical knowledge by showing us that C.I. Lewis’s “the given” in perceptual experience was a myth, Soames takes Austin, and by implication Quine, to have dismissed a source of skeptical arguments against empirical knowledge by showing us that what intelligibly remains of “the given” in perceptual experience is the Austinian/Quinean “observation sentence.” Where Rorty took Quine to have questioned
successfully the intelligibility of the 18th century epistemological question, “How is synthetic a priori knowledge possible?”, a question that needed to be answered if Kant was to refute Humean skepticism, and thus making unnecessary our preoccupation with this budget of 18th century philosophical problems, Soames takes Kripke to have re-established, not the intuitive content of contingent a priori knowledge, which on Soames’s account (pp. 418-21) turns out not to be very intuitive (e.g. propositions expressed by “P if and only if actually P” – of which contingent a priori knowledge is possible, just not very interesting to a Kant wanting to refute Hume’s skepticism) but rather, the intuitive content of necessary a posteriori knowledge.

For Soames, as for most philosophers, the metaphysical interest of the view is the account of “theoretical identities” employing natural kind predicates. With some amendments and extensions of Kripke’s views, Soames argues for the following to be necessary a posteriori (pp. 438): For all x, x is a drop of water if and only if x is a drop of a substance molecules of which contain two hydrogen atoms and one oxygen atom. On the left-hand side of the biconditional is a simple natural kind predicate ‘drop of water’ and on the right-hand side is a compound natural kind predicate. The former are like proper names; the latter are like singular descriptions. By contrast, “For all x, x is a woodchuck if and only if x is a groundhog” expresses the necessary, a priori proposition that “For all x, x is a woodchuck if and only if x is a woodchuck” expresses; one just need not know that the original sentence expresses that proposition. Soames seeks to disarm objections to a Kripkean account of necessarily true theoretical “identities” by positing that not all epistemic possibilities are metaphysical possibilities; some of them are impossible (p. 455). This and the distinction between sentences and propositions keep at bay the worst consequences of Rationalism’s theory of knowledge: the view that if a metaphysical truth is necessary it must be a priori (or known innately, like Descarte’s knowledge of the meaning of ‘jaune’, or remembered, like Plato’s knowledge of the Forms) while still preserving the thrill of acquiring knowledge of necessary truths. For Dewey, at first blush, this would still seem to be the “quest for certainty” unabated. But Dewey would think, once understanding that these identities are necessarily true if true actually, that the metaphysical certainty of necessity is earned on the cheap. One still has to do the labor of empirical investigation to figure out what is true actually. Then, given names and natural kind terms, one gets the metaphysical necessity of the truth for free. So water is necessarily H2O, and maybe Mind is necessarily not Matter. But for Dewey the thrill of necessity would be gone. It’s now only a semantic thrill, despite the semantic’s nom de plume ‘metaphysical’; it’s the semantics of a modal language interpreting individual constants, and the posit (the “persuasive definition”) that a “substance” is a natural kind (roughly, the (by stipulation -- p. 436) unique entity described by metaphysically necessarily co-extensive predicates (p. 440)) specified by how it is constituted physically (p. 441). Dewey would think that all the interesting work is now done by the posit, the uniqueness stipulation, and the state of one’s scientific theory of “the physical.” If one abandons, as Hilary Putnam has now done, the metaphysically necessary in the case of water, much of this work cannot be done.

Soames concludes this tome with the claim that Kripke’s discovery of metaphysically necessary a posteriori truths 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 understanding of our own
philosophical past (p. 456).” Dewey would have applauded the brilliance of Kripke’s semantics for modal logic while thinking, with A.N. Whitehead, that the ways round the counter-intuitive aspects of Kripke’s views – propositions vs. sentences, epistemically possible but metaphysically impossible states – are not inventions mothered by necessity, but futile dodges instead. For the interesting philosophical work is now to be done elsewhere: understanding (or failing to understand) natural kinds and a scientific theory of the physical while encumbered by concepts of propositions, possible worlds, etc. The new “Quine” will write a paper “Two Dogmas of Logical Rationalism”, dismantling all this confident talk of metaphysical necessity with the same brio with which White, Goodman, and Quine attacked semantical analyticity. Only this time, instead of psychological behaviorism as the scientific paradigm, there will be some form of cognitive science and neuroscience lurking in the background of the young philosophers who will abandon all these necessities. T.H. Green thought Hegel’s Absolute Idealism was the culmination of the dialectical development through the Rationalists, the Empiricists, and Kant. Scott Soames thinks that Kripke’s Logical Rationalism is the culmination of a dialectical development. The theses of Ayer’s Logical Empiricism and the anti-theses of “meaning as use” in the later Wittgenstein and Austin (though in rather different ways in their two cases) lead to the “transcendental” synthesis of meaning as “said” meaning (truth-conditions) combined with “implied” meaning as conversational inferenda, or holistic “radical interpretations,” in Grice and Davidson. Kripke, playing Hegel to their Kant, takes the step beyond Grice and Davidson’s adherence to the austere idiom of an extensional, non-modal, first-order language in his thesis that identity statements in which the identity sign is flanked by names are metaphysically necessarily true if they are true. Then, just as T.H. Green extended, corrected, and fulfilled Hegel, Soames extends, corrects, and fulfills Kripke’s picture of “theoretical identities” as metaphysically necessary.

Despite Soames’s differences with Rorty, their preoccupation with forms of skepticism, about perceptual knowledge and about the power of our notions of linguistic meaning, remain common to their historiographies of the achievements of 20th century analytical philosophy. If in Rorty one wearied of the lengthy digressions about the Antipodeans’ conception of the mind, and in Soames one wearies of the lengthy digressions about the Kripkean notion of the contingent a priori, both books converge, remarkably enough, on the same fundamental preoccupation of philosophy 1930 – 1970 in the Age of Meaning: justifying forthright anti-skepticism about knowledge and meaning. In Soames’s history Grice’s architectonic of Maxims of Conversation preserves truth-conditional meaning against Wittgensteinian skepticism about meaning (a skepticism that Kripke takes seriously in his Rules and Private Language , Oxford, Blackwell, 1982), and Kripke preserves knowledge of necessity against Quinean skepticism about modality and its associated epistemology and metaphysics. The books are as different stylistically as such books can be, Soames’s chock-a-block with critical discussion of arguments, Rorty’s chock-a-block with blocks and chocks. But Soames, like Rorty, has written a deeply interesting and historiographically provocative book.

1 I am grateful to Matthew Davidson, Al Martinich, Hilary Putnam, Paul Saka, and Morton White for comments on earlier versions of this essay.
A post-Gricean answer to the question of the meaning of ‘or’, radically different from Grice’s, is suggested by Atlas, *Logic, Meaning, and Conversation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 52-5. It is that ‘or’ is not ambiguous; it has neither the strong (exclusive disjunction) nor the weak (inclusive disjunction) sense but is semantically non-specific between them. For a discussion of semantical non-specificity, see Chapter One of Atlas (op.cit., 2005) and Chapters One and Two of Atlas, *Philosophy without Ambiguity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989).


I defend the analytic/synthetic distinction in Atlas (op.cit. 2005), pp. 181-4, as a distinction required for adequate explanation in linguistic theory.


Soames has a view of propositions as structured entities, but no discussion of his technical notion appears in these passages. Such a discussion would show a less intuitive side of his theoretical concept of proposition.

How about Soames’s impossible world-states? Is there an impossible world-state in which Nixon exists and is, say, to use a famous example of Rogers Albritton’s, a filling-station? Soames is committed (n.6 p. 378) to Nixon’s being in one of these impossible world-states – or in The Great Impossible Pumpkin World-State, if there is only one. So why isn’t he a filling-station? If Nixon couldn’t be a filling-station in an impossible world – in fact if he must be a human being (p. 375) even with respect to that impossible world – one wonders what could logically limit the extension of an allegedly essential property like “humanity” if contradiction or metaphysical impossibility couldn’t. Perhaps Soames is thinking of an “impossible world” of the Kripkean sort, in which Nixon was not the son of Hannah Nixon but was still a human being necessarily. But as I understand Nathan Salmon’s views, “The Logic of What Might Have Been,” *Philosophical Review* 98 (1), 1989: 3-34, even if Nixon could not be a filling-station, the possibility of the possibility of his being a filling-station cannot be ruled out, since Salmon rejects S4, and the transitivity of the accessibility relation, as characterizing necessity. (Hilary Putnam, in his “Is Water Necessarily H₂O? (1990)” (p. 55-6 -- see n. 12 below), points out that Kripke has held of the Albritton cases (glass bottles might turn out to be organisms) and the Putnam case (tigers might turn out to be the glass bottles that are frightened) that what has been shown is not that it is conceivable that tigers are glass bottles but only that it is conceivable that it could become conceivable. Putnam notes that if we construe ‘conceivable’ as ‘possible to conceive’, then Kripke was denying the characteristic axiom of S4: ◊◊p → ◊p, for ‘conceivability’.) But then why is humanity an essential property of Nixon? And how about a filling-station – call it ‘Bert’? Could it be a human being in that impossible world? And Soames thinks that these are “modest” theoretical commitments? Even if one takes modal metaphysics seriously, or technical notions of the designation by proper names of possible individuals, or virtual individuals in Dana Scott’s manner (in his “Advice on Modal Logic,” K. Lambert (ed.), *Philosophical Problems in Logic: Recent

8 In fact, what Quine thinks is required for the modal interpretation of individual variables is just what Kripke adopts for identity, as one can see by substituting in Quine’s formula, letting ‘Fu’ =df ‘x = u’.

9 Alan White (Modal Thinking (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1975)) offers the further paraphrase ‘It was possible that this man should have lost the election’, but his suggestion raises many questions that I cannot pursue here, so I shall forbear.

10 There is a trivial objection to an unintended ambiguity in Kripke’s wording, but I shall mention it anyway. It is linguistically false that “when you ask whether it is necessary or contingent that Nixon won the election, you are asking the intuitive question whether in some counterfactual situation, this man would in fact have lost the election.” Who says that it is sufficient to determine either the necessity or the contingency that Nixon won the election that ‘This man would have lost the election’ or ‘It was possible for this man to have lost the election’ is to be evaluated only with respect to counterfactual situations? One would have to think that ‘would have’ entails ‘did not’ to suppose the worlds for evaluation are only counterfactual worlds. But it is linguistically obvious that an assertion of ‘He would have got in by the back door’ does not even conversationally implicate, much less entail, that he did not get in by the back door.

11 Familiar at least since 1868, when it was articulated in a brilliant essay “Some Consequences of Four Incapacities” in the Journal of Speculative Philosophy by Charles Sanders Peirce; Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce, Vol. 1-6, C. Hartshorne and P. Weiss (eds.), Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1931-5; specifically see Volume 5, Par. 264ff.