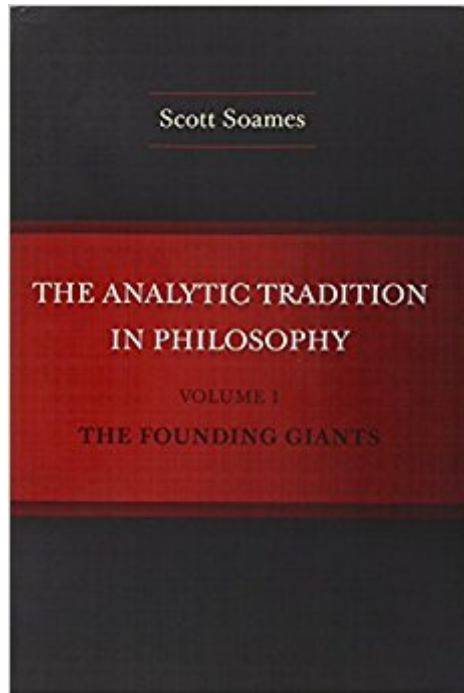


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The Analytic Tradition In Philosophy, Volume 1: The Founding Giants



Synopsis

This is the first of five volumes of a definitive history of analytic philosophy from the invention of modern logic in 1879 to the end of the twentieth century. Scott Soames, a leading philosopher of language and historian of analytic philosophy, provides the fullest and most detailed account of the analytic tradition yet published, one that is unmatched in its chronological range, topics covered, and depth of treatment. Focusing on the major milestones and distinguishing them from the dead ends, Soames gives a seminal account of where the analytic tradition has been and where it appears to be heading. Volume 1 examines the initial phase of the analytic tradition through the major contributions of three of its four founding giants—Gottlob Frege, Bertrand Russell, and G. E. Moore. Soames describes and analyzes their work in logic, the philosophy of mathematics, epistemology, metaphysics, ethics, and the philosophy of language. He explains how by about 1920 their efforts had made logic, language, and mathematics central to philosophy in an unprecedented way. But although logic, language, and mathematics were now seen as powerful tools to attain traditional ends, they did not yet define philosophy. As volume 1 comes to a close, that was all about to change with the advent of the fourth founding giant, Ludwig Wittgenstein, and the 1922 English publication of his *Tractatus*, which ushered in a "linguistic turn" in philosophy that was to last for decades.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"The first in a projected five-volume set, this is a brilliant, challenging, and stimulating philosophical exegesis of seminal texts. . . . In this monumental work, Soames explicates in detail and insightfully

critiques virtually every aspect of their philosophical contributions."--Choice

"This is an incredibly rewarding book. The range of topics and level of detail are breathtaking. Soames is very skilled at turning the prose of other philosophers into clear, precise, and logically transparent arguments. Over and over again he takes an unfiltered passage and turns it into a numbered sequence of premises and conclusion. It is exceptionally useful and productive to have arguments laid out in this standard form. This volume will be a great pedagogical tool, both as a classroom text and as a reference."--Peter Hanks, University of Minnesota

Partly overlaps with the first volume of Philosophical Analysis in the Twentieth Century, still looking forward to the next volume.

Well, I did and profited greatly from it, but it took much of my free time for a month. (I admit to a special interest in the history of analytic philosophy, having made my own modest contributions in print to the subject.) Soames is a leading figure in contemporary philosophy and he brings all of his brilliance and expertise to bear on the philosophical convolutions of The Founding Giants--Gottlob Frege, Bertrand Russell, and G. E. Moore (and they ARE convoluted). Soames's book is 650 or so densely packed pages of detailed philosophical explanations and argumentation. He makes no compromises with the reader. All of the topics are treated in daunting, tricky and technical, and illuminating detail, many definitely requiring further study. A first pass on a straight-through reading like I did hardly does them justice. This is volume 1 of what promises to be a monumental 5 volume history of analytic philosophy. This is definitely not for the general reader--it is aimed at fellow practitioners. Soames offers the clearest, best, most searching examinations of many of the topics he covers: E.g. the formal logic of Frege's philosophy of mathematics and language, Moore's ethics, and Russell's logicism. Soames's book is a philosophical history. There is very little about the social, political, and cultural aspects of analytic philosophy and likewise very little about the lives and characters of the philosophers studied. E.g. one reads this entire work without learning that Russell was a pacifist during WW1 and spent six months in jail as a result. What Soames does is open the hood, dismantle the engine and minutely examine all the working parts of the seminal works of Frege, Russell, and Moore. He finds this system is poorly designed, that one not machined to perfection, that part not working as intended, the whole thing more-or-less poorly engineered; and he makes many suggestions for improving the design and construction--some ingenious and insightful, others more questionable. I would call this book magisterial, but I did not carefully work

through all of the technical passages in detail. Let me say that what I did understand and study carefully I found to be exceptional clear, insightful, and useful. Reading this book has been the most stimulating philosophical exercise that I have undertaken in many a year. It is certainly a philosophical tour de force.

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