A New Vision in Analytic Philosophy: 1918 to 1945
Scott Soames

Mondays and Wednesdays, May 29th – June 21st, 2017
5 PM – 8 PM, H-104
PUCP

This seminar continues the story of the early years of the analytic tradition in which Frege, Moore, and Russell tried to establish a philosophical paradigm based on conceptual and logical analysis. As I explained in the previous seminar, their emerging paradigm was new, but their aim was traditional -- to use new analytic means to solve traditional problems of ethics, epistemology, and metaphysics. As I also mentioned, Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* changed the nature of the analytic project. In the new seminar I will continue the story showing how, in the 1920s, the assimilation of Russell and Wittgenstein by Moritz Schlick and Rudolf Carnap led to logical empiricism, in which analysis ceased to be regarded as a mere tool and came to be identified with philosophy itself. The goal of the logical empiricists was not to advance traditional philosophical worldviews, which they believed must inevitably exceed the limits of intelligibility. Their goal was to formalize, systematize, and unify science. The new seminar will critically evaluate the key views of the logical empiricists concerning logic, language, epistemology, metaphysics, and ethics. The aim will be to isolate systematic causes of philosophical failure in order to identify and retain genuine insights that can be used to advance philosophical logic, philosophy of language, epistemology, metaphysics, and ethics today.

Each seminar will consist of two 1 and ½ hour parts, separated by a 15 minute break.

Books

Alfred, J. Ayer (1936), *Language, Truth, and Logic*, London: Gollancz, 2nd. Ed. 1946.

_____, (1959), *Logical Positivism,* New York and London: The Free Press.

Rudolf Carnap (1928), *Der Logische Aufbau der Welt,* Leipzig: Felix Meiner Verlag; English translation *The Logical Structure of the World; Pseudoproblems in Philosophy*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967.

_____, (1937), *The Logical Syntax of Language,* tran. (1934b) by Amethe Smeaton with expansions by the author. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Sahotra Sarkar (1996a), *The Emergence of Logical Empiricism: From 1900 to the Vienna Circle*, Vol. 1, New York: Garland Publishing.

_____, (1996b) *Logical Empiricism at its Peak*, Vol. 2, New York: Garland Publishing.

Moritz Schlick, (1939) *Problems of Ethics,* New York: Prentice Hall.

Scott Soames (2017), *The Analytic Tradition in Philosophy*, Vol. 2. *A New Philosophical Vision*
Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press.

Ludwig Wittgenstein (1922), *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, translated by C. K. Ogden, New York:
Dover, 1999.

Class 1: The Tractarian Theory of Representational Thought and Language and the Resulting Conception of Philosophy

This class will assess the strengths and weaknesses of Wittgenstein's rejection of Frege-Russell propositions, his new conception and language and linguistic meaning, his criterion of intelligibility, and the consequences of this criterion for philosophy.

Reading:
Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus.* Selections.
Soames, "Propositions, the *Tractatus,* and "The Single Great Problem of Philosophy," *Critica,*
August 2016.
Soames, *The Analytic Tradition,* Vol. 2, chapter 4.

Class 2: The Early Vienna Circle and the Roots of Logical Positivism

This class will trace the influence of Hilbert, Mach, Duhem, Einstein, Russell, and Wittgenstein on early Vienna circle led by Moritz Schlick and Rudolf Carnap.

Reading:
Soames, The Analytic Tradition, Vol. 2, chapter 5.

Class 3: Carnap's Logical Structure of the World (the Aufbau)

In the *Aufbau* Carnap tries to demonstrate the possibility of constructing a unified scientific description of the world uniting every science in a system capable of answering all intelligible questions about the world and ourselves. Our aim will be to identify the reasons for his failure to achieve this, and to salvage lessons for epistemology, philosophy of language, and philosophy of science today.

Reading:
Carnap, *The Logical Structure of the World*, selections.
Soames, *The Analytic Tradition,* Vol. 2, chapter 6

Class 4: The Heyday of Logical Positivism: Truth, Meaning, Modality, and Metaphysics

This class will investigate classical logical positivist positions concerning language, truth, necessity, knowledge, apriority, and the elimination of metaphysics, in each case separating their genuine insights from the errors that prevented them from reaching their goals.

Reading:

Carnap, "The Old and the New Logic, in Ayer (1959), 133-146; "The Elimination of Metaphysics Through Logical Analysis of Language, in Ayer (1959), 60-81; "On the Character of Philosophical Problems," *Philosophy of Science* 1934, 1: 5-19; in Sarkar (1996b).

Hahn, "Logic, Mathematics, and the Knowledge of Nature," in Ayer (1959), 147-161.
Hempel, Carl G., "On the Logical Positivist's Theory of Truth," *Analysis,* 1935, 2: 49-59.
Schlick, "The Turning Point in Philosophy," Ayer (1959), 53-59; "On the Foundation of Knowledge." in Ayer (1959), pp. 209-227.
Reichenbach, Hans (1938), *Experience and Prediction,* Chicago: U. of Chicago, selection
Soames, *The Analytic Tradition,* Vol. 2, chapter 7.

Class 5: Tarski's Theories of Truth and Logical Consequence

The achievements of these theories are explained and distinguished from misconceptions. Special attention will be paid to Carnap's enthusiastic but flawed responses to Tarski.

Reading:
Soames, *The Analytic Tradition in Philosophy,* Vol. 2, chapter 9.

Class 6: The Attempt to Explain Necessity and Apriority Linguistically

This class will discuss the origins of these doctrines, their significance for logical positivism, and the errors on which they were based.

Reading:
Ayer, *Language, Truth, and Logic,* selections.
Carnap, *The Logical Syntax of Language,* selections.
Quine, "Truth by Convention," in *Ways of Paradox.* New York: Random House, 1966, 70-99.
Soames, *The Analytic Tradition in Philosophy,* Vol. 2, chapter 10.

Class 7: The Rise and Fall of the Verifiability Criterion of Meaning

This class details the role of the verifiability criterion in logical positivism and the reasons it had to be abandoned.

Reading:
Ayer, Introduction to *Language, Truth, and Logic.*
Hempel, "The Empiricist Criterion of Meaning," in Ayer (1959), 108-129.
Church, "Review *of Language, Truth, and Logic*", *Journal of Symbolic Logic,* 1949,14:52-3.
Soames, *The Analytic Tradition in Philosophy,* Vol. 2, chapter 11.

Class 8: The Ethics and Metaethics of the Logical Positivists

This class discusses the sharp divide between Schlick, whose naturalistic ethics was based on a frankly empirical theory of human psychology, and emotivists like Ayer, Carnap, and Stevenson, who believed that ethical sentences can't be used to make statements that are true or false. An attempt will be made show how the emotivists' concern with the action guiding character of ethical language might be accommodated within a theory like Schlick's without giving up the idea that ethical statements may be true or false.

Reading:
Ayer, *Language, Truth, and Logic*, selections.
Stevenson, "The Emotive Meaning of Ethical Terms," in Ayer (1959).
Schlick, *Problems of Ethics*, selections.
Soames, *The Analytic Tradition in Philosophy,* Vol. 2, chapters 12 and 13.