THE ANALYTIC TURN IN AMERICAN PHILOSOPHY: AN INSTITUTIONAL PERSPECTIVE—PART 1: SCIENTIFIC VERSUS HUMANISTIC PHILOSOPHY

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This two-part paper reconstructs the analytic turn in American philosophy through a comparative, longitudinal study of philosophy departments at three major universities: Princeton, Yale, and Columbia. I trace their hiring policies, tenure decisions, and curriculum designs and the external pressures that forced them to continuously adapt their strategies, and I use those analyses to distill some of the factors that contributed to the rapid growth of analytic philosophy between 1940 and 1970. In this first part, I show that philosophers at Princeton, Yale, and Columbia actively tried to promote a "humanistic" conception of philosophy until the early 1950s. I argue that logical positivism and related "scientific" approaches were seen as a fundamental threat to the discipline and that this opposition influenced decision-making at all three institutions. Although many students and recent graduates saw philosophy as a scientific discipline, senior members of the community deplored the decline of the humanities and appointed mostly humanistic philosophers. I show that this generational conflict was reinforced by demographic, political, and economic developments and argue that these discriminatory practices helped forge a coalition between logical empiricists, scientific pragmatists, and ordinary language philosophers, who all began to identify as "analytic" philosophers after the war.

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1. Introduction

In one of his last letters as chair of the philosophy department at Yale University, in 1959, Charles W. Hendel reflected on how American philosophy had changed during his 16-year tenure as head of department. When he had moved to New Haven, Connecticut, just before the war, most of his US colleagues had viewed philosophy as a humanistic field of study. The "philosophy of John Dewey," Hendel wrote, "was the dominant school of thinking" and dictated the public and intellectual conversation. Other members of the community identified as realists or idealists, but most of them agreed that philosophy should view its work "in relation to . . . the needs of human life." Less than two decades later, however, American philosophy had transitioned into a different intellectual culture. "The analytic method," Hendel observed, was now the "dominant" one. Philosophers were no longer studying "ethics as an interpretation of ethical judgment" but had replaced it with the analysis of moral concepts. Work in the history of philosophy had greatly diminished, too, as many of his students had ceased to study the great minds of the past, approaching philosophy as a series of puzzles to be solved in short, technical articles. Hendel, himself a historian of philosophy, was one of the few chairs who had tried to preserve "the humanistic character" of his department and recommended that the faculty's executive committee do the same: "If any changes occur in personnel . . . I should now advise that attention be paid to the philosophical disciplines that . . . are not now in the limelight so that the present unbalance may be restored."[1]

How do philosophical transitions start, unfold, and eventually succeed? How did the analytic method come to dominate American philosophy? In recent decades, historians have produced detailed reconstructions of the intellectual and sociocultural developments that gave rise to various conceptions of analysis and scientific philosophy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (see Richardson 1997). They have shown how groups of philosophers and scientists in, among others, Berlin, Cambridge, Harvard, Prague, Vienna, and Warsaw stimulated the development of an international network of like-minded academics who had a formative influence on philosophy (e.g., Wolenski 1989; Beaney 2007; Milkov and Peckhaus 2013; Misak 2013; Stadler 2015; Verhaegh 2024). Logicians and philosophers such as Rudolf Carnap, C. I. Lewis, Hans Reichenbach, Bertrand Russell, Susan Stebbing, and Alfred Tarski came from a variety of

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[1] Charles W. Hendel, "Letter to the Executive Committee of the Faculty of Arts and Science," April 27, 1959, box 105, folder 10, Wilfrid Sellars Papers, Archives of Scientific Philosophy, University of Pittsburgh (WSP-ASP).

backgrounds but were familiar with each others' work and sought to build "intellectual bridges" among their communities (Morris 1935, 148). In the years before World War II, several European members of this network sought refuge in the United States, where they continued their efforts to promote a more scientific approach to philosophy.

Although historians have a good understanding of the early development of this movement, surprisingly little is known about the decades thereafter. Textbooks tend to present "analytic philosophy" as a tradition emerging out of the aforementioned networks but ignore the fact that few members of the Vienna Circle, the Berlin Group, and the Harvard School identified as "analytic philosophers" themselves. Historians, that is, still have to create a satisfying narrative about (i) when and why US philosophers started to label their work as "analytic" (see Richardson 2017) and (ii) how the approach came to dominate American philosophy. This last question is especially pressing because most US philosophers still viewed their discipline as a humanistic field of study in the years before the war. In the 1930s and 1940s, Hendel's letter shows, departments at elite institutions were still filled with philosophers who despised the "movement to 'logicise' everything in the philosophical panoply of learning."[2] John Hermann Randall Jr., the informal leader of the Columbia naturalists, was "convinced that 'philosophical analysis' would . . . kill the philosophical enterprise completely." And Robert Scoon, head of Princeton University's philosophy department, dismissed the scientific philosophers' "extreme" attempts to impose their "positivistic limitation[s]" on philosophy. In their roles as chairs and university administrators, we will see, philosophers such as Hendel, Randall, and Scoon actively tried to combat the spread of scientific philosophy.[3]

How, then, did US philosophy transition to a new intellectual culture? An important part of the answer, I argue, can be found through a study of policy documents such as Hendel's report to Yale's executive committee and Scoon's and Randall's correspondence with university administrators. Departments of philosophy at institutions such as Princeton, Yale, and Columbia have saved a wealth of material, and an analysis of these documents can offer a valuable peek behind the curtains. Presidential records; personnel files; faculty meeting minutes; yearbooks; tenure files; budget proposals; curriculum meetings; advisory reports; and correspondence among chairmen (they were always men), trustees, presidents, faculty, deans and provosts, I show, allow us to obtain a relatively sharp and detailed picture of the factors that played a role in America's analytic turn.

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[2] Charles W. Hendel, "Letter to the Executive Committee," April 27, 1959, WSP-ASP.

[3] John Hermann Randall Jr. to Sidney Hook, October 25, 1951, 24.09, Sidney Hook Papers (SHP), Hoover Institution Library and Archives, Stanford University, Stanford, CA; Robert Scoon to Harold W. Dodds, June 4, 1946, box 134, folder 20, Office of the President Records: Harold W. Dodds (OPRD), Princeton University Archives.

This two-part paper reconstructs the transformation of American philosophy between approximately 1940 and 1970 through a comparative longitudinal study of the development of three major philosophy departments: Princeton, Yale, and Columbia. I trace their hiring policies, their tenure decisions, their curriculum designs, their budgets, their long-term plans, their internal debates, and some of the external pressures that forced them to continuously adapt their strategies, in order to distill some of the factors that contributed to the analytic turn. I argue that while these three departments eventually developed rather different profiles, all went through roughly the same phases in responding to scientific (and later "analytic") philosophers, in particular the logical positivists and their young, ambitious followers. I argue, first, that the transformation of US philosophy was first a foremost a *generational* transition—a clash between senior professors who emphasized philosophy's connection with the humanities and a new generation of philosophers that sought to develop the discipline in a more scientific direction. Second, I argue that this generational conflict was deepened by a series of broader political, economic, and demographic developments: the Great Depression, the Second World War, the academic job market, and the explosive growth of higher education when the baby boom generation entered college.[4]

Departments are an important unit of analysis if one seeks to understand broad intellectual shifts in the professionalized academic culture of the twentieth century. Whereas historians of philosophy tend to focus on the ideas and activities of individual philosophers, departments decide who is hired, who gets tenure, and which views and methods are taught to the next generation. Most importantly, elite departments such as Princeton, Yale, and Columbia have a tremendous influence on the development of philosophy because they confer prestige on particular schools and movements. If a respected institution such as Princeton's department of philosophy had decided to hire mostly phenomenologists or process philosophers instead of logical empiricists and analytically oriented scholars like John Kemeny (in 1951), Hilary Putnam (in 1952), and Carl Gustav Hempel (in 1955), for example, US philosophy might well have looked very different today. Shifting the focus from individuals to departments will not just provide us with a broader perspective on the development of American philosophy. It will also help us better grasp how new ideas and approaches are distributed through cycles of hires, promotions, and retirements.

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[4] Some of these external factors, such as the influence of the war and the growth of higher education, have also been discussed by among others (Galison 1998; Reisch 2005; Isaac 2013; Strassfeld 2020). A comparative study of these three departments in this period, I argue, can help us determine to what degree these factors influenced decision-making on an institutional level.

This article is divided into two parts. In this first part, I describe how philosophers at Princeton, Yale, and Columbia actively tried to promote a "humanistic" conception of philosophy in the 1930s and 1940s. I argue that there was widespread agreement that the logical positivists and affiliated movements were a fundamental threat to the discipline and that this opposition influenced hiring policies, tenure decisions and curriculum designs at all three institutions. While many students and junior professors preferred to develop philosophy into a scientific discipline, senior members of the community deplored the decline of the humanities and appointed mostly humanistic candidates. I show how this generational conflict was reinforced by demographic, political, and economic developments and argue that these discriminatory practices helped forge a coalition among logical empiricists, scientific pragmatists, and ordinary language philosophers, who all began to identify as "analytic philosophers" after the war.[5]

In the second part, I argue that the marginalization of scientific philosophy was eventually unsustainable, and I show how this led philosophers at Princeton, Columbia, and Yale to shift gears when some the most vocal opponents retired. In the 1950s, a new generation of chairmen tried to craft more "balanced" departments, noting that an ideal curriculum should pay equal attention to "the historical and humanistic aspects of philosophy on the one hand and the logical and scientific on the other."[6] Though this new policy, for some, was a strategy to protect humanistic approaches to philosophy, I argue that it had the opposite effect. The increased demand for analytic philosophers, the explosive growth of philosophy departments, and the subsequent shortage of graduates with formal training in logic and philosophy of science, created a fierce competition between elite departments. Within a decade, representatives of the new movement were flooded with job offers, thereby tipping the balance in the other direction. The department that had invested most in the new movement—Princeton—became the brightest star in the Ivy League firmament, rising from the sixth place in a 1957 reputational ranking to the first position 12 and 25 years later,

[5] A note on terminology: I use the labels "logical positivism" and "scientific," "analytic," and "humanistic" philosophy in the way American philosophers used them in the 1940s and 1950s. As will become clear, they sometimes used these terms in a slightly different way than we use them today. In this article, I ignore the question of whether Americans philosophers correctly interpreted the views of, e.g., the logical empiricists, nor will I problematize their assumption that it is possible to speak about *the* views of the logical empiricists in the first place.

[6] Ledger Wood to Robert F. Goheen, February 22, 1960, box 13, folder 7, Office of the President Records: Robert F. Goheen (OPRG), Princeton University Archives.

while the department that kept trying to balance scientific and humanistic approaches—Yale—lost most of its analytic faculty and dropped from second to seventh to thirteenth place in the same period (Keniston 1959, 140; Cartter 1966, 29; Roose and Anderson 1970, 50; Jones et al. 1982, 148–58). Within a generation, America's most prestigious departments had become strongholds of what was by then called "analytic philosophy."

2. Crisis

In the late 1930s, many American philosophers felt that their field was in a state of crisis. Philosophy had long played a central role in public debate and higher education, but its influence had started to wane. Student numbers were "dwindling" (APA 1938, 189), and the split between philosophy and society had grown into a "gap of serious proportions." The general public, these philosophers believed, expected "comprehensive wisdom that can fortify faith," but many of their colleagues had become "professional" academics who were mostly engaged with "technical problems and rules of procedure" (Murphy 1945, 69). William James, Josiah Royce, and John Dewey had all been well-known intellectuals who helped shape America's self-image. Yet many contemporary philosophers had become technocrats "whose business it [is] to publish, every so often, systematic and stillborn treatises on epistemology and the like subject" (Becker 1932, 35). Documents from the period suggest a widespread feeling that the discipline was retrogressing and that "something ought to be done" (Blanshard et al. 1945b, x). Even Harvard University President James Conant wrote about the "depressed state of philosophy as an academic field of study" (1946, 89).

The causes of the alleged crisis were many. One frequently mentioned factor was the elective system, which gave college students a lot of freedom to choose courses that best fit their future needs. Philosophy had always been the capstone of the college degree, but the new system had greatly reduced its privileged position. Ethics, logic, and metaphysics had become specialisms among specialisms and had to compete with an "overwhelming profusion" of alternative courses. Even small colleges, philosophers complained, were offering long lists of classes, including classical subjects such as Latin and mathematics and practical courses like "'business English' and . . . 'practical poultry raising'" (Blanshard 1945a, 11). In 1938, the American Philosophical Association (APA) Committee on Opportunities for Employment concluded that the college degree had become "an aggregation of specialties" and that philosophy was "adversely affected" (1938, 188) by the development. The discipline had once been of the queen of the sciences, but the educational system had pushed it into the role of the handmaid.

Philosophers at Princeton, Yale, and Columbia were particularly disturbed by the situation and called for "a revolt against the elective system."[7] Yale professor Brand Blanshard thought students were showing signs of "intellectual indigestion" and believed that philosophy should "play a more distinctive and important role" in integrating "the mass of knowledge we are asking students to master" (1945b, 90–91). W. P. Montague, professor at Columbia, worried about the "evils of the elective system" (1925, 142) and wrote that to "leave a child free to study any subject" is to leave him "intellectually and culturally naked" (417). And Jacques Maritain, who was hired by Princeton in the late 1940s, was convinced that college students should be taught philosophy to provide them with "a universal and articulate comprehension of human achievement" (1943, 48–50) in the arts and sciences.

A second frequently mentioned factor was the growing professionalization of philosophy itself. Philosophers used to be intellectual generalists who sought to develop a comprehensive vision on science, religion, and culture. But they had gradually been superseded by specialists who aimed to solve clearly delineated, technical puzzles and who published their findings in short articles aimed at fellow academic philosophers. Robert Scoon, chairman of Princeton's philosophy department, believed that philosophers had been "led astray by the specializing and departmentalizing tendency which has ruled in American scholarship": "Everybody else was becoming a specialist, and so inevitably we attempted to become specialists [ourselves]. This was perfectly natural . . . only it hasn't seemed to work well with philosophy. . . . We attempted to become a scientific specialty and we accordingly had to purify ourselves of all 'practical taint'."[8] In becoming an academic discipline, Scoon felt, philosophy had lost its cultural value and relevance to other fields of study. The greatness of the "greatest philosophers of the past, such as Plato, Aristotle, Kant, and Hegel" was their ability to integrate the demands of "science, practice, art, [and] religion" so "as to speak for life as whole."[9] But American philosophers were living in an age in which the formulation of a "comprehensive, over-all interpretation of life" was left to "popularizers, pedagogues, and 'applied philosophers'" (Murphy 1945, 56).

In addition to these internal, academic shifts, which may be evaluated positively or negatively depending on one's conception of philosophy, there were also some pressing, external events that contributed to the feeling of "crisis." One such factor was the Great Depression. In the 1930s, the economic situation had changed the mood of the nation and greatly diminished the demand for philosophy courses. The US student population shrank during the first years of the depression, and a much smaller proportion of those students was interested in subjects such as ethics and epistemology (NCES 2012). At Princeton, for example, philosophy had been one of the most popular majors in the mid-1920s, but students massively turned "away from the humanities" ("Trend Away from the Humanities," *Princeton Alumni Weekly*, January 31, 1936, cited in Axtell 2006, 220–21) during the big slump. The average undergraduate enrollment in all philosophy courses decreased with one-third between 1926 and 1940, and the average number of philosophy majors shrank with 32% in the same period.[10] At the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), professors were alarmed by the "number of students" who told them "that they wish they had time for philosophy but must land jobs."[11] Similar trends were visible at other universities, as the economic conditions were fostering "the demand for vocational courses and programs of study." Student numbers in philosophy were falling and this continuing decrease of enrollments "seriously affect[ed]" the philosophical job market (APA 1938, 188–89).

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[7] Brand Blanshard, ca. 1945, "A Commission and Its Province: The State of American Philosophy," draft manuscript, box 2, folder 27, Brand Blanshard Papers, Yale University Library (BBP).

[8] Robert Scoon to Charles W. Hendel, October 22, 1943, box 134, folder 20, OPRD.

[9] Scoon to Hendel, October 22, 1943, OPRD.

Philosophy took another big hit with the start of the Second World War. Whereas mathematics, physics, and medicine were "riding high," the humanities, including philosophy, were facing yet another "temporary eclipse." In the words of Blanshard, president of the APA between 1942 and 1945, "Military officers, assessing the possible worth of philosophers in their country's service, have rated them at zero, and inquired hopefully whether they remembered their elementary mechanics or algebra, or indeed anything else that was useful. . . . For the greatest business of their time many [philosophers] have been told they had nothing to offer."[12] Whereas their colleagues in physics and chemistry contributed to classified research projects for the federal government and armed services (Axtell 2006, 418), many philosophers felt inadequate and useless. Not only did most of them lack the skills and expertise to contribute to the war effort, they also discovered that very few "philosophers ha[d] anything to say" about the political state of the world. Philosophers had "failed" and shown "lack of purpose."[13]

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[10] Philosophy Department Advisory Council, *Report on Princeton's Department of Philosophy*, July 19, 1946, box 134, folder 20, OPRD.

[11] Donald Piatt to Robert Sproul, June 21, 1938, "Reports to the President of the University of California," box 4, folder 31, Bancroft Library, University of California (UC), Berkeley.

[12] Brand Blanshard, ca. 1945, "A Commission and Its Province," BBP. A different version of this paragraph was published in Blanshard (1945a, 8).

[13] Comment by Laurence Sears, "Minutes of a Chicago Conference on the Function of Philosophy in Liberal Education," December 1, 1943, box 2, folder 26, BBP.

3. The APA Committee on the Function of Philosophy

In response to the threats to their discipline, philosophers did what they do best in periods of crisis: they debated the purpose of philosophy. While their former and prospective students were fighting in Normandy and Iwo Jima, American philosophers used the period for serious soul-searching. Between 1943 and 1945, an APA-commissioned committee consisting of Hendel, Blanshard, Arthur E. Murphy, Curt J. Ducasse, and Max C. Otto consulted more than 1,000 APA members, journalists, congressmen, clergymen, social workers, scientists, businessmen, university presidents, and deans to talk about "the present state of philosophy" (Blanshard et al. 1945b, vii). They "made a philosophical pilgrimage of some seven thousand miles" and organized "twenty-one conferences in seven cities," and they received and read "hundreds of letters," eventually publishing their findings in a series of essays and a 64-page journal article (Blanshard 1945a, 3–5; Blanshard et al. 1945a, 197; 1945b, vii–ix; Brightman 1947, 404).[14]

Archival documents concerning the committee's activities reveal that the threat to philosophy was often explicated in terms of a growing split between the sciences and the humanities. Incoming correspondence and minutes of the 21 conferences show that philosophers worried that the modern university had become "a nest of specialists" in which scientists keep "clear of the humanities" and refuse to commit themselves "upon anything that could not be measured."[15] The "eclipse of the humanities" was caused by a "corruption of the curriculum" such that universities grossly overemphasized "things like psychology, 'social science,' science itself, and vocationalism" (letter from P. A. Carmichael, cited in Blanshard et al. 1945a, 217). Maximilian Beck argued that the "theoretical denial of *values* has been the fateful result of modern scientific thinking" (Blanshard et al. 1945a, 208), and Cecil Currie complained that "the sciences which pretend to have man as their subject . . . have usually fastened on those aspects of his nature which can be handled on the model of physical science": "Mainly due no doubt to the prestige of science in our world, they have come to be accepted generally as the whole and adequate understanding of human life. They pride themselves on being objective, unprejudicial, and especially impersonal and non-evaluating. But values are the very life-blood of personal and collective life" (208). To restore the traditional role of philosophy in higher education, many participants believed, the field should return to its historical task and "supply the capstone of every college student's experience" (letter from W. S. Learned, cited in Blanshard 1945a, 13). One of the committee's main conclusions was that philosophy courses should contribute to the “integration of the undergraduate’s knowledge.” Instead of viewing philosophy as a specialism, philosophers should encourage students to reflect upon their curriculum’s “total meaning and general bearing on life,” they should integrate “values and knowledge,” and they should “deepen” their students’ awareness of what is at stake.” Philosophy, the participants felt, should have an “integrative function,” although it was not always clear to what extent they agreed on what ‘integration’ should entail.[16]

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[14] Blanshard, ca. 1945, "A Commission and Its Province," BBP.

[15] H. S. Canby, cited in Blanshard, ca. 1945, "A Commission and its Province," BBP.

Considering this perspective on the purpose of philosophy and the widespread complaints about overspecialization and scientific thinking, it should be no surprise that many of the philosophers were skeptical about logical empiricism, a movement that had been growing in popularity since the early 1930s. There is no “recent development,” Blanshard concluded, “that has been so much a storm center as this newer positivism” (1945a, 27). Although the APA committee was diplomatic in its official publications, the underlying documents reveal that many contributors considered the movement to be an important part of the problem. Both Hendel and Blanshard, arguably the most active members of the committee, were well-known opponents of logical positivism, and some of the committee’s correspondents explicitly worried about how “much . . . this movement [has] caught on among the younger generation.” Whereas the elective system, the declining student numbers, the Great Depression, and the war were *external* threats to philosophy, logical positivism was viewed as an additional, and perhaps more dangerous, *internal* threat. Philosophers should not just worry about its critics “from the outside,” Currie maintained, as there existed a faction within the discipline “who come at philosophy principally from the side of logic.” Currie, a McGill University professor and one of the most vocal participants at one of the conferences on the function of philosophy, wrote a letter to Hendel explaining his concerns about this group of philosophers who were attacking philosophy using “extremely inadequate” criteria of meaning: “What is needed first of all is a profound sense for the meanings of human life, and this is something which these people lack, being formalists. Is it not the height of provincialism, not to say arrogance: this charge that philosophy has always been on the wrong road, or no road at all, and must finally be put straight.”[17] Currie’s complaints were not out of the ordinary. Many American philosophers, including most members of the committee, were concerned about logical positivism's "absurd statute of self-limitation" (Blanshard 1952, 227). Montague worried that "the increasing preoccupation with 'logical positivism' and 'semantics' was reducing speculative inquiry to a barren verbalism, as futile as it is boring." Charles E. Cory wrote that philosophy's emphasis "on logical clarity is producing a kind of sterility that has largely destroyed its cultural value." And E. W. Strong complained about the "ingrown scholasticism of professors" who "confine themselves to a technical vocabulary" because it will make philosophy "unintelligible to any but the philosophically initiated" (Richard Robinson, Robert L. Patterson, Montague, Cory, and Strong, cited in Blanshard et al. 1945a, 198, 201, 231, 234).[18] One of the committee's correspondents said that the discipline's excessive focus on "symbolic logic" sacrifices "the core of philosophy . . . to the same nominalism which destroyed the medieval university" (Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy and G. T. W. Patrick, cited in Blanshard et al. 1945a, 217), and another participant recommended "a very decided restriction in the courses in . . . mathematical logic and logical empiricism" (232).

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[16] Blanshard, ca. 1945, “A Commission and its Province,” BBP; statement by Stephen C. Pepper, “Minutes of the Berkeley Meeting on the Function of Philosophy,” December 7, 1943, box 2, folder 26, BBP; comment by M. Harris, “Minutes of the 1st Baltimore Meeting on the Function of Philosophy,” December 20, 1943; summary by Blanshard, “Minutes of the 3rd Baltimore Meeting on the Function of Philosophy,” December 21, 1943, box 2, folder 26, BBP.

[17] Cecil Currie to Charles W. Hendel, May 31, 1944, box 2, folder 27, BBP.

Philosophers were not just worried about the positivists' narrow conception of philosophy. Their opposition also had a moral component connected to the movement's noncognitivist theory of values. A. C. Ewing said that a subjectivist position could "easily lead to a weakening of the sense of obligation and a deterioration of ethical standards and practice." Lewis, who had initially welcomed positivism as a like-minded movement, soured on it in the 1940s, dismissing its theory of valuations as "one of the strangest aberrations ever to visit the mind of man" (1946, 366, 399). Not only had logic become such as "craze" that it began to suppress the theory of value in the university curriculum, but the positivists' perspective on values itself was deemed immoral, too (Ewing and Patrick, cited in Blanshard et al. 1945a, 209, 247). Several philosophers at Princeton, Yale, and Columbia even went as far as to associate the positivists with fascist modes of thinking. If the positivists are right that ethical statements are mere expressions of subjective feelings, Blanshard (1949, 511) argued, one might have to conclude that the Nazi invasion of Poland was justified because the German public overwhelmingly approved it (see also Blanshard 1945a, 28). Dewey argued that if all judgments about value are "mere ejaculations," we get something resembling a totalitarian system in which "all issues of conduct, personal and collective" are relegated "to decision by superior force" (1942/1985, 18). And Walter Stace, professor at Princeton, gave an interview in which he said that "the spirit of the ethical relativist is the spirit of Fascism." If there is no "single or permanent moral standard," Stace maintained, it is easy to use the relativist's conclusion to justify the claim that moral standards depend on "national temperaments" (Daily Princetonian 1939).[19]

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[18] Strong's words mirror those of Dewey, who, in one of his last talks, described logical positivism as the "new scholasticism" (Randall 1953, 7; Lamont 1959, 13).

4. A New Generation

The Great Depression and the Second World War did not just reinforce the philosophers' looming feeling of crisis. They also affected the composition of American philosophy departments. Given shrinking budgets, austerity measures, and decreasing student numbers, departments hired very few people between 1932, when the financial crisis began to affect American universities, and the end of the war (Geiger 1986, 246). Combined, Princeton, Yale, and Columbia hired only five assistant professors in this 14-year period, less than one-sixth of the tenure-track appointments they made in the 14 years thereafter. As a result, these departments had grown relatively old when their students returned to campus. In 1946, only two philosophers under age 40 had a position at one of the three Ivy League universities.[20]

Considering this unequal distribution of academic positions, it should be no surprise that the publications of the APA committee almost exclusively reflect the perspective of the association's senior members. Not only were some young philosophers excluded because they had no academic affiliation, but many of them were unable to attend one of the 21 APA conferences on the function of philosophy because they were involved in the war effort. At Princeton, Yale, and Columbia, more than 85% of faculty had been educated during or even before the period they thought of as the "Golden Age of American Philosophy" (Frankel 1960), and many of them looked back with some nostalgia to an era in which philosophers had played a different role in academic and public life. The ideas and perspectives of their junior colleagues, mostly children of the twentieth century, were little represented.

This exclusion of young voices is significant because archival documents suggest that logical positivism and related schools of scientific philosophy were much more popular among the new generation. The movement had been first introduced in North America by philosophers who were in their twenties or early thirties—Albert Blumberg, Sidney Hook, Susanne Langer, Charles Morris, Ernest Nagel, and W. V. Quine—and correspondence shows that many

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[19] Note that logical empiricism was actually, in part, a philosophical response to the rise of fascism (see, e.g., Romizi 2012).

[20] Strassfeld draws a similar conclusion about eleven leading philosophy departments in the United States (including Princeton, Yale, and Columbia), noting that "faculties in these departments were advanced in age by the end of World War II" because of "lagging hiring during the Depression and the war" (2020, 851).

American graduates sympathized with the Vienna Circle's approach to philosophy. Lewis signaled that "logical positi[vi]sm easily takes first place in the interest and the discussion of our students," and Ralph Barton Perry mentioned the "trend which takes the students at this time to Wittgenstein and other positivists."[21] After Moritz Schlick had spent a year at the University of California, Berkeley as a visiting professor, his successor found his views "so firmly established among his students" that he deemed it necessary "to spend two preliminary meetings of his seminar on an examination of them."[22] Logical positivism, Nagel wrote, had made "a decided impression" upon the "younger men in the profession" but the "old-timers . . . distrust it, dislike it, and pretend that it has nothing very important to say."[23]

Naturally, it is difficult to precisely pin down why the new generation sympathized with the positivists. What is clear, though, is that many of them were products of the very elective system their teachers despised. They had been educated as specialists and viewed methodological rigor as the road to progress. Logical positivism, they read, was based on "extensive inquiries into the foundations of logic, mathematics, and physics" and was linked to some of the most exciting scientific developments of the century: the "work of Poincaré and Einstein in the foundations of physics and Frege and Russell in the foundations of mathematics" (Blumberg and Feigl 1931, 281–82). The "new movement," therefore, was not yet another philosophical 'ism' but an ambitious and optimistic program that represented "the agreement of numerous logicians, philosophers, and scientists" (281). This narrative contrasted starkly with the gloomy perspective of the students' professors, who complained that the discipline had lost its cultural and academic appeal. Some students felt that their teachers had had no new ideas "since 1831" (Hegel's year of death) and appreciated the positivists' attempts at a fresh start.[24] A. J. Ayer's crisp analyses showed why traditional philosophical disputes had been unfruitful, and the Unity of Science movement promised "a New French Encyclopaedia" through the collaboration of experts "from all the departments of science" (Ayer 1936; McGill 1936, 45). Langer later wrote that she was part of a group of "perceptive, serious students . . . who looked forward to a new philosophical era, that was to grow from logic and semantics" (1964, 306). And

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[21] C. I. Lewis to Moritz Schlick, December 14, 1934, 107/Lew-1, Moritz Schlick Papers (MSP), Wiener Kreis Archiv, Haarlem; Ralph Barton Perry to Robert Scoon, April 24, 1947, box 134, folder 20, OPRD.

[22] Donald Mackay to Moritz Schlick, May 4, 1933, 109/Mack-2, MSP.

[23] Ernest Nagel to Otto Neurath, January 2, 1936, item 275, Wiener Kreis Archiv, Noordhollands Archief, Haarlem.

[24] Comment by P. A. Schilpp, "Minutes of the 3rd Chicago Meeting on the Function of Philosophy," December 2, 1943, box 2, folder 26, BBP.

Nagel, a student of Dewey and Morris Cohen, was impressed by the aspirations and technical precision of Carnap's work, concluding that "a man can have a larger vision, without being simply ecstatic or, as in the case of Dewey and Cohen, very muddy."[25]

Nagel was not the only one to emphasize the technical superiority of the positivists. Many philosophers of the new generation recognized the theoretical continuities between pragmatism and logical positivism but preferred the latter's standard of precision. When Quine first read Carnap's *Der Logische Aufbau der Welt*, he saw striking similarities between this work and the views of his teacher C. I. Lewis but noted that the German philosopher added "definiteness and clarity," thereby clearing "the way for unlimited important advances of a rigorously scientific nature."[26] Charles L. Stevenson argued that his emotivist theory of value statements was "not dissimilar" to "the ethical writings of John Dewey" (1944, 1), but he felt that the modern methods of analysis could help to "clarify" the meaning of ethical terms (12). And Morris was sympathetic to Dewey and Mead's views in aesthetics but believed that they could "be given a much more precise formulation" (1939, 131).

This is not to say that these young philosophers were pure technocrats. The older generation worried that the "acids of modernity" had "eaten away moral idealism."[27] But it would be a mistake to conclude that their successors secluded themselves from the world's problems. On the contrary, the new generation promoted a scientific approach to philosophy partly because they viewed the values of science as a model for public life. They wholeheartedly embraced the view of the psychologist Mark A. May, who believed that "society may hail the code of the scientist as a noble ideal to be held up as a standard": "All will agree that honesty, courageous search for truth, loyalty to facts and principles, tolerance, generosity, and impersonal controversy are worthy ideals. If men everywhere lived by them, there would be less crime, less war, less suffering, and better mental health . . . that which society holds as an ideal, science attempts to practice" (May 1944, 44). The ideals realized through scientific inquiry, Nagel argued, are "also the ideals which are indispensable to the successful operation of any society of free men" (1956, 306). Logical positivism promised to implement these ideals in philosophy.

The new generation's favorable attitude toward logical positivism and associated schools cannot not just be understood by referring to the US elective system or the movement's ambitions and approach. Most likely, the students' outlook was also affected by the longest and deepest economic crisis in the country's history. Many students preferred to be trained as specialists because they knew they would be graduating in the direst of circumstances. One magazine wrote that the traditional Princeton student, cloaked in "self-conscious, pseudo-sophisticated diffidence" (cited in Axtell 2006, 184), could no longer hold his pose while staring into the face of unemployment. Even an exceptional talent like Quine, all but guaranteed to be offered a prestigious post in regular circumstances, rushed through graduate school, completing his master of arts and doctor of philosophy (PhD) degrees in two years because "there was a depression and the jobs were scarce" (1985, 85). The 'eclipse of the humanities' was not just a matter of declining student numbers, the students who did pursue a degree in philosophy had different interests, too. Gone were the days of careless speculation and attempts to fulfill "the practical-aesthetic impulse toward the highest goods of humanity" (W. H. Sheldon, cited in Blanshard et al. 1945a, 201). Philosophy departments were not hiring, and intellectual generalists would not stand a chance on the nonacademic job market.

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[25] Ernest Nagel to Sidney Hook, December 3, 1934, container 22.08, SHP.

[26] W. V. Quine to John Cooley, April 4, 1933, item 260, WVQP. See Verhaegh (2023).

[27] Comment by Arthur E. Murphy, "Minutes of the 3rd New York Meeting on the Function of Philosophy," February 5, 1944, box 2, folder 26, BBP. The phrase "acids of modernity" is a reference to Lippmann (1929, chap. 4).

The war, finally, also reinforced the generation's confidence in formal tools and technical solutions. Not only had mathematicians, scientists, and engineers helped the United States defeat the Nazis, but many young philosophers had been actively involved in military research programs themselves. John Kemeny took part in the Manhattan Project, found the investigations "very exciting," and went on to write a dissertation under Alonzo Church at Princeton.[28] Leon Henkin (1996, 133–34), a former Columbia student, used advanced mathematical models to work on radar problems, and Adolf Grünbaum worked in the radiation laboratory of the Columbia University division of war research before pursuing a PhD under Hempel at Yale (Pitt News 1984). It is only natural that these experiences altered the students' skills and preferences. Indeed, Patrick Suppes remembers that Columbia students brought in new ideas "about what should be taught in graduate school" after they had been discharged. In 1947, veteran students were unhappy with Columbia's course offerings and took matters in their own hands. They had learned about "von Neumann and Morgenstern's theory of games" and "organized . . . an informal seminar" about the new field in their spare time (Suppes 1979). At Yale, Hempel's logic course attracted so many students (230 attended in 1951), that they complained that they could not see the blackboard anymore. To salvage the situation, Hempel had to start writing his formulas on a “special kind of paper coated in black wax,” and then they were projected on a screen by a “special projector.”[29]

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[28] John Kemeny to Alonzo Church, November 11, 1945, Alonzo Church Papers, box 18, folder 31, Princeton University.

5. Yale University

In the academic world, generational transitions tend to be gradual. A typical department employs scholars in many age groups, and new ideas and perspectives are constantly introduced through cycles of junior hires, promotions, and retirements. The Great Depression and the Second World War, however, largely disrupted this system. Few philosophers of the new generation were able to find academic positions such that senior professors were mostly shielded from the views of the people who had, in normal circumstances, been their colleagues. Although the positivists had long left behind the strictly verificationist views that were typically associated with the Vienna Circle (if they had ever held them), philosophers at Princeton, Yale, and Columbia could stick to the received view and neglect all later developments as “fruitless and irrelevant” (Edman 1941, 562). Logical positivism, the philosophers believed, was simply narrow and immoral, no matter how refined its analyses. Even H. M. Sheffer, one of America’s best-known symbolic logicians, said that the movement “gravely damaged” philosophy and claimed that he had “rather not . . . been born” if his work had “done anything to stimulate [the] development” (cited in Berlin 1978, xxvi).

As a result of this generational imbalance, the old guard was able to maintain the status quo for quite some time. Carnap, Herbert Feigl, and Reichenbach had been able to find positions when logical empiricism was still a relatively new phenomenon, but the American professoriate became increasingly skeptical about hiring scientific philosophers from the late 1930s onward. Even when the philosophers at Princeton, Yale, and Columbia were allowed to hire new assistant professors in the years after the war, when large numbers of students returned to campus, the professors in charge mostly hired in their own image. Some philosophers recognized that “we ‘older boys’ have to take cognisance . . . of the enthusiasm and conviction of the younger logicians,” but they rarely considered them suitable candidates for junior positions.[30] Between 1946 and 1950, the three departments appointed 14 new assistant professors—more than three times as many as they had hired in the decade before—and only 3 of them had a broadly scientific approach to philosophy (Monroe Curtis Beardsley,

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[29] Carl Gustav Hempel to Ernest Nagel, November 23, 1953, box 28, folder 1, Carl Gustav Hempel Papers (CGHP), Archives of Scientific Philosophy, University of Pittsburgh. I thank Fons Dewulf for sharing this material.

[30] Charles W. Hendel to Brand Blanshard, May 11, 1951, box 17, folder 382, BBP.

George Berry, and Frank Sibley).[31] While 8 of these 14 junior hires would eventually become full professors at one these departments, the 3 technically oriented philosophers never received a permanent contract. Sibley was denied tenure; Beardsley left Yale after just one academic year; and Berry, a student of Quine, moved to an assistant professor position at Boston University. The latter's move was likely connected to Scoon's decision to cancel Berry's sophomore logic class a year before he was up for tenure. The Princeton chairman was skeptical about the "philosophical or general significance" of the new logic and restricted the department's offerings to just one upper-class course, thereby effectively communicating his lack of confidence in the young logician, despite the latter's growing reputation "in the field."[32]

The bias against scientific philosophy is especially clear in Yale's handling of Stevenson, who was denied tenure in 1946. The Harvard graduate had just published his now classic book *Ethics and Language*, but the Yale philosophers composing his tenure committee decided that his emotivist analysis showcased his shortcomings as a philosopher. Wilbur Urban, a recently retired Yale professor, had already publicly spoken about "the unbelievable effrontery of labeling a large part of significant human discourse meaningless" (1937, 591), and it appears that many of his successors—in particular, Hendel, Blanshard, and Robert Calhoun—shared his conclusion. Minutes of the tenure committee show that members unanimously judged that Stevenson's analyses were "not accurate" and that his arguments evaded "issues that anyone with any reasonable grounding in philosophy would be expected to appreciate." Hendel, chairman of the department, recognized the, in principle, "desirability of having a member of a widespread and apparently important movement of thought" represented in the department but said that "if this movement had no better representative than Professor Stevenson, its . . . significance [is] to be questioned and the idea of having it represented rejected."[33]

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[31] The other junior hires were Justus Buchler, Charles Frankel, Joseph Leon Blau, and John R. Everett (at Columbia); James Ward Smith, Arthur Szathmary, and Walter Kaufman (at Princeton); and Iredell Jenkins, Rulon Seymour Wells, George Alfred Schrader, and William Merland Walton (at Yale).

[32] Faculty File: "Berry, George D. W.," box 35, Faculty and Professional Staff files (FPSF), Princeton University Archives; Robert Scoon, "Letter to Alumni and Friends," January 1952, box 207, folder 18, OPRD. See also Quine's recollection that "the young science of mathematical logic was suspect, because of a mistaken notion that it supported logical positivism" and that "job-hunting philosophers of those Depression years were wary of flaunting logic as a qualification or of cultivating it as a specialty" (1987, 142).

[33] "Summary of the Action Taken with Regard to the Status of Assistant Professor Charles L. Stevenson," March 7, 1945, box 17, folder 381, BBP. See also Kuklick (2004, 324–25).

The clash between Stevenson and his seniors is exemplary of the generational conflict between scientific and humanist approaches to philosophy. Stevenson saw himself as a philosopher "who wants more science in ethics" and complained that his colleagues at Yale preferred to focus on moral philosophy's "'spiritual' element," defining the discipline "in such a way that they can say . . . that my book 'isn't ethics'."[34] Hendel, on the other hand, preferred a more "humanist" approach to moral philosophy and believed that philosophers should study "ethics as an interpretation of ethical judgment in human existence." He believed that the discipline's focus on analysis was "disastrous," as the analysts "abstract themselves from what ethics is all about," limiting themselves to "work with words, sentences, and the purely 'literal'."[35] Although he was not opposed to analysis as such, he felt that ethics should be an analysis not of words and sentences but "of human experience and action"; an "*inquiry* into 'right' and 'rational' as applied to human conduct or institutions connected with human existence."[36]

The Stevenson affair was not an isolated event. Something similar happened a few years later when Hempel, another representative of the new movement, was up for promotion. Hempel had joined the department as an associate professor in 1948 and had been explicitly hired to replace Stevenson and contribute to the department's offerings in logic and philosophy of science. Hempel, at the time, was well aware that "the senior members of the department . . . hold philosophical views which differ widely from my own" but had been assured that the Yale professors were eager to have "a representative of logical empiricism . . . in their midst."[37] But when he was up for promotion in 1952, the professors (again) decided that the positivist's work was not up to standards. They judged that "the work that [Hempel] produced did not seem of the significance we require of full professorship" and decided that they "could not at this time recommend him for promotion." Although Hempel had just published *Fundamentals of Concept Formation in Empirical Science*, the Yale professors were "concerned" about the substance of his publications and asked him for "some kind of work that would make a mark and exhibit a measure of originality."[38] Hendel himself, moreover, was worried about Hempel's influence on Yale's undergraduates. While Hempel had an "excellent" teaching record and was very popular with the students, who "greatly appreciated" the "clarity" of his lectures, Hendel felt that his logic course was "extremely inadequate." It evaded "the *fundamental* problems of logic," the chairman felt, because it discussed only formal systems. Hendel believed that it is "senseless to talk about truth tables and truth values without ever examining what is meant by truth" and asked Blanshard to take over half of the course in order to open the students' minds "to the philosophical meaning and philosophical questions that appear."[39]

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[34] Charles L. Stevenson to Herbert Feigl, December 2, 1945, 04-17-01, Herbert Feigl Papers, Elmer L. Andersen Library, University of Minnesota Libraries (HFP).

[35] Charles W. Hendel, "Letter to the Executive Committee of the Faculty of Arts and Science," April 27, 1959, box 105, folder 10, WSP-ASP.

[36] Charles W. Hendel, "Comments on *Ethics and Language* by Charles L. Stevenson," June 4, 1943, box 17, folder 381, BBP.

[37] Carl Gustav Hempel to George A. Lundberg, July 16, 1948, box 28, folder 1, CGHP.

[38] Charles W. Hendel to Brand Blanshard, October 23, 1952, box 17, folder 382, BBP. Eventually, the professors did come around and nominated Hempel for a promotion to full professor. The damage had already been done, however, and Hempel left the department in 1955. See also Kuklick (2004, 325–26).

Yale's opposition to scientific philosophy was not limited to its professors of philosophy. Hendel's superiors had reservations, too. After Hempel left New Haven in 1955, the department set out to find yet another "person outstanding in positivism or analytic philosophy" to replace him. The provost, however, told Hendel that the department was not "permitted to increase the number of persons . . . in the field of logic and the philosophy of science."[40] Yale already employed several nonpositivist logicians and philosophers of science—F. S. C. Northrop, Frederic Fitch, and Henry Margenau—and the provost believed that "it would be better to have a really distinguished philosopher in any field than a merely adequate analyst." When the department unanimously nominated Wilfrid Sellars, who had been Feigl's right-hand man at the Minnesota Center of Philosophy of Science, to be their "token 'positivist'," the appointment was "tabled" by the school's executive committee.[41] Only after a series of meetings in which Hendel had to explain the rationale behind Sellars's nomination, the appointment was approved in 1959.[42]

6. Princeton University

The ruling class's opposition to symbolic logic, positivism, and philosophical analysis did not just influence junior hires and promotions at Princeton, Yale, and Columbia. It also affected professor-level appointments. All senior hires at these departments in the 1940s—Blanshard, Maritain, Montague, and Paul Weiss—were philosophers who explicitly opposed the positivists and related schools of scientific philosophy. Blanshard was a committed idealist and well known for his elaborate arguments against various forms of analytic philosophy (see Fogelin 1980). Montague, we saw, complained that "the increasing preoccupation with 'logical positivism' and 'semantics'" was "reducing speculative inquiry to a barren verbalism" (in sec. 3). Maritain (1936) was a Christian philosopher who challenged secular perspectives because they failed to incorporate man's spiritual nature. And Weiss founded the Metaphysical Society of America shortly after his appointment, complaining that the "positivists" and the "semanticists" deny "in the name of science or logic" the "meaning of any question which cannot fit inside the limits they [themselves] have set up."[43]

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[39] Hendel to Blanshard, October 23, 1952, BBP.

[40] "Letter to the Executive Committee of the Faculty of Arts and Science," April 27, 1959, box 105, folder 10, WSP-ASP.

[41] "Letter to the Executive Committee," April 27, 1959, WSP-ASP; Kuklick (2004, 328). Kuklick also cites a 1960 letter from Blanshard to his colleagues, notifying them that Yale President Alfred Whitney Griswold instructed him to hire more "humanists."

[42] "Letter to the Executive Committee," April 27, 1959, WSP-ASP.

To better understand the dynamics of hiring in this period, it is worth reconstructing Princeton's attempts to build a new department in the late 1940s. Princeton had once been a prestigious place to study philosophy because of its esteemed faculty, including Norman Kemp Smith and Edward G. Spaulding, but it had lost some of its best-known philosophers in the 1930s. Declining student numbers (see sec. 2) had led to a 33% drop in the department's budget between the late 1920s and the early 1940s, and what had once been a flourishing unit of seven tenured professors and six junior teachers (in the year 1930–31) had become an understaffed department comprising only two full professors (the aforementioned Scoon and Stace), two associate professors (Ledger Wood and Paul Ushenko), and half a dozen instructors, teaching assistants, and lecturers.[44] In 1946, the department's advisory council sounded the alarm in a report to Princeton's president, Harold W. Dodds, warning the administration that the division was a mere "ghost of the group" that had once constituted one of the most esteemed philosophy departments in the country.[45] Ralph Barton Perry, a Harvard professor and external advisor, concurred with the council and urged Dodds that the unit was "in need of radical improvement, in both the quality and the quantity of its personnel."[46]

Once the president had accepted these pleas and promised that he was "willing to invest all that is necessary . . . to make Philosophy tops here," granting the department a prestige appointment at the "very highest salary paid in the university," a battle ensued about the future of Princeton philosophy.[47] Although nominations for new hires could, strictly speaking, be made only by the department, hundreds of pages of archival material suggest that more people were weighing in: external advisors, members of the department's advisory board, and the university's board of trustees all shared their solicited and unsolicited advice in letters to Dodds.[48] Conservative forces were especially eager to share their preferences concerning the candidate's profile. Henry P. Van Dusen, a Princeton trustee and president of the Union Theological Seminary, reminded Dodds of the university's deep commitment to a "Christian position" and insisted that the new professor's "attitude toward religion be frankly positive, and, if possible, thoroughly Christian."[49] Granville Gates, a Baptist clergyman, warned the president not to hire a Catholic because he feared that members of "the Roman hierarchy" could not "avoid being illiberal."[50] And John Mackay, a Presbyterian theologian and president of the Princeton Theological Seminary, expressed "a deep concern . . . over some attitudes and trends in the Department" and recommended Emile Cailliet, the later author of *The Christian Approach to Culture* (1953).[51]

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[43] "Press Release: Metaphysical Society of America," April 15, 1950, box 127, folder 1077, Charles Seymour, President of Yale University, Records, Series 1, Correspondence and Subject files, 1917–1954, 1937–1950, Yale University Library (CSYR).

[44] "Department of Philosophy, 1946–47," box 134, folder 2, OPRD.

[45] Philosophy Department Advisory Council, *Report on Princeton's Department of Philosophy*, July 19, 1946, OPRD.

[46] Ralph Barton Perry to Harold W. Dodds, October 30, 1946, box 134, folder 2, OPRD.

[47] Harold W. Dodds to Nelson Rose, May 29, 1947, letter one of two, box 134, folder 2, OPRD.

Naturally, Scoon and his colleagues were displeased by the theologians' interference. The department's chairman was "not very enthusiastic" about Cailliet and warned Dodds "to make a pretty large discount" on Van Dusen's suggestions. The trustee's recommendations were mainly based on "the criterion of how religious [candidates] are," and Scoon cautioned the president that the theologian "was fundamentally incapable of understanding philosophy."[52] Instead of appointing a candidate with a religious profile, Scoon believed that the "Department ought to be build up on the Humanistic side."[53] He preferred, in the words of Van Dusen, "a twentieth century pragmatist rather than a nineteenth-century idealist."[54] Scoon and his colleagues were more sympathetic to some of the names that had been suggested by Perry, one of the chairman's external advisors, who had submitted a long list of candidates with "a genuine vocation for philosophy in the constructive sense."[55]

The interactions between Scoon and Dodds show that the philosophers at Princeton did not consider themselves reactionaries who were ignoring candidates that would strengthen the department's profile in the positivist tradition, so popular among the new generation. On the contrary, they were fighting an entirely different battle in which they found themselves on the progressive side. Scoon and his colleagues had been educated in a period when "Idealism was everywhere firmly in the saddle," and the chairman had always "sympathized strongly" with the "fresh points of view" of "Realism, Pragmatism, and Instrumentalism" that were beginning "to make themselves heard" at the time.[56] Thirty years later, they were still fighting the same battle in trying to block Van Dusen's suggestions. Scoon could simply dismiss newer movements, such as the Vienna Circle, because the one thing all parties did agree on was that a scientific philosopher was out of the question. Van Dusen explicitly demanded that the "nominee's major interest and competence be . . . *not* in logic, epistemology, semantics, or philosophy of science" and vetoed one candidate—William Dennes—because he was a "positivist in philosophical outlook."[57] Perry, who had scouted potential hires in England, concluded that only H. H. Price and C. D. Broad were suitable candidates because they had "the genuine, old-fashioned metaphysical impulse" and thus were not "suffering from the trend which takes the students at this time to . . . [the] positivists."[58] And Scoon himself was also deeply skeptical about the "extreme" positivists, who did not leave "any scope for philosophy."[59] Scoon's claim that the department needed a "humanist" was thus an effective way to kill two birds with one stone. It helped him block both Van Dusen's 'thoroughly Christian' candidates as well as the scientific philosophers who sought to impose a "positivistic limitation" on philosophy.[60]

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[48] See, e.g., Dodds's presidential records, box 134, folders 2 and 3, OPRD.

[49] Henry P. Van Dusen to Harold W. Dodds, November 13, 1946, box 134, folder 2, OPRD.

[50] Granville Gates to Harold W. Dodds, May 26, 1948, box 134, folder 3, OPRD.

[51] John Mackay to Harold W. Dodds, March 26, 1947, box 134, folder 2, OPRD.

[52] Henry P. Van Dusen to Harold W. Dodds, March 27, 1947; Harold W. Dodds to John Mackay, February 27, 1947; Robert Scoon to Harold W. Dodds, November 12, 1946, box 134, folder 2, OPRD.

[53] Robert Scoon to Harold W. Dodds, June 4, 1946, OPRD.

[54] Van Dusen to Dodds, March 27, 1947, OPRD.

[55] Perry to Dodds, October 23, 1946, box 134, folder 2, OPRD.

The positivists, in sum, never had a chance in Princeton's search for a new senior professor. Although Princeton was, to some degree, a hotspot for scientific philosophy, given the presence of Alonzo Church (department of mathematics), Paul Oppenheim (who had settled in Princeton after fleeing Europe), and Kurt Gödel and Albert Einstein (Princeton's Institute of Advanced Study), Scoon and his colleagues were convinced that philosophy should be a humanistic field of study. When Princeton celebrated its bicentennial in 1946, some of the world's best-known logicians (Church, Gödel, Stephen Kleene, Quine, Raphael Robinson, and Tarski) gathered to participate in a symposium on mathematical logic (Sinaceur 2000), but the Princeton philosophers were engaged in an entirely different symposium on "The Humanistic Tradition in the Century Ahead" elsewhere on campus

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[56] Robert Scoon, "Remarks at the Meeting of the Philosophy Department Advisory Council," May 7, 1955, box 173, folder "Scoon, Robert Maxwell," FPSF.

[57] Van Dusen to Harold W. Dodds, November 13, 1946, OPRD, box 134, folder 2. Dennes was a professor at UC Berkeley and though it is an exaggeration to say that he was a positivist, he had been much influenced by Moritz Schlick when the latter had been a visiting professor there in the early 1930s. See Verhaegh (2020, 131–3).

[58] Perry to Scoon, April 24, 1947, OPRD.

[59] Scoon, "Remarks at the Meeting," May 7, 1955, FPSF.

[60] Scoon, "Remarks at the Meeting."

(Leavitt 1946). Reichenbach's name was included as a second-tier candidate on one of the handwritten lists stored in the Princeton University Archives, but it is unlikely that he was ever a serious candidate.[61] Not only was he a scientific philosopher, but also he had a Jewish background. Scoon had once told Carnap that the department would never hire a "non-Aryan" professor, and Van Dusen's correspondence strongly suggests that his focus on "thoroughly Christian" candidates was antisemitic code. In the same letter, the Princeton trustee dismissed the phenomenologist Maurice Mandelbaum as a possible Princeton professor because he was "a Jew with a negative attitude toward religion in general, and Christianity in particular," a quality van Dusen considered to be "characteristic of the 'emancipated' Jewish mind."[62] Similar prejudices played a role at Yale when they were considering hiring Weiss, also a philosopher of Jewish descent. In a letter to Charles Seymour, the president of the university, Hendel suggested that Weiss might be a "liability" because of his background. "It is not that he is a Jew," Hendel wrote, but that he is likely to have some of the "deficiencies that Jewish people labor under apart from racial prejudice," most notably a "lack of social discretion."[63]

Eventually, Princeton settled on Jacques Maritain as their "prestige" appointment. Maritain was a French medievalist and neo-Thomist philosopher who had been a visiting professor in the department before. Although he was Catholic, he was a perfect compromise candidate, as he was both "distinguished in the field of Christian philosophy" and someone who approached the discipline from a humanistic perspective.[64] In his books, he had tried to develop a Christian approach to humanism, which he called "integral humanism," and he was a well-known proponent of restoring philosophy as the capstone of the college degree (Maritain 1936, 1943). Maritain enjoyed high esteem even at less traditional American philosophy departments, and his appointment was "unanimous[ly] endorsed" by professors "in sister humanistic departments, such as the departments of classics, history, and modern languages and literatures."[65] Only Laurence Rockefeller, a member of the advisory committee, was "somewhat concerned" that the French philosopher might use his position at Princeton "for Catholic propaganda."[66] Other than that, Maritain perfectly fulfilled the department's wish to get "some more talent at the top . . . on the humanistic side."[67] If Princeton philosophy students wanted to acquaint themselves with the *Principia Mathematica*, they were referred to the mathematics department, where Alonzo Church taught a course in mathematical logic.[68]

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[61] Autograph note, ca. 1947; "Recommended Philosophers," ca. 1947, box 134, folder 3, OPRD. Reichenbach is not mentioned on a more official, typed list of 26 possible hires.

[62] Rudolf Carnap to Hans Reichenbach, June 12, 1936, container 013-41-1, HRP; Henry P. Van Dusen to Harold W. Dodds, November 13, 1946, box 134, folder 2, OPRD. See Sanua (1987) on Princeton's anti-Jewish reputation.

[63] Charles W. Hendel to Charles Seymour, October 2, 1945, box 127, folder 1077, CSYR.

[64] Press release, May 19, 1948, box 328, folder: "Maritain, Jacques," FPSF

[65] Robert Scoon to Jacques Maritain, December 1, 1947, box 134, folder 3, OPRD.

[66] Robert Scoon to Harold W. Dodds, ca. June 1948, box 134, folder 3, OPRD.

7. Columbia University

The above reconstructions suggest that religion was an important factor in Yale's and Princeton's opposition to logical positivism. It would be a mistake, however, to conclude that the movement necessarily fared better at more secular institutions. Quite the contrary, the positivists were not only viewed with suspicion at universities with Presbyterian or Congregationalist roots; some of the fiercest opposition came from Columbia University, well known for its naturalist school of philosophy. The historian Andrew Jewett has even described Columbia's department as "the nerve center of a powerful current of American resistance to logical empiricism" (2011, 111).[69]

Columbia naturalism is a philosophical perspective that rejects the lofty aspirations of religion and traditional philosophy and employs a more modest and empirically respectable approach to questions about reality. Whereas speculative philosophers attempt to construct an a priori foundation for our scientific, moral, and spiritual beliefs, naturalists dismiss the idea that philosophy can play any such role. They believe that our ordinary, a posteriori methods of inquiry are the only reliable road to knowledge and that the results of science cannot be validated or refuted from an external perspective. F. J. E. Woodbridge, one of the founders of the school, defined naturalism as the "incorporation of man into nature" (1932, 87), dismissing any philosophy that appeals to divine or transcendental powers. John Dewey, without doubt the best-known Columbia naturalist, characterized philosophy as a discipline that "has no private store of knowledge or methods for attaining truth" and must therefore utilize "the best available knowledge of its time and place"—that is, "the subject-matter of natural existence as science discovers and depicts it" (1925, 408).

Naturalism had been the "house philosophy" of Columbia's department since the early 1900s, when Woodbridge and Dewey began to build a closely knit school at New York's oldest university. Many of their students, including Irwin Edman, Horace L. Friess, James Gutmann, John Herman Randall Jr., and Herbert W. Schneider identified as naturalists and became Columbia professors themselves. In 1954, the year the university celebrated its bicentennial, 10 of 11 tenured professors at Columbia's philosophy department were homegrown naturalists who had been supervised by Dewey or Woodbridge or were students of their students. Most of them saw naturalism as a secular alternative to religion. Through a persistent critique of empirically unsustainable ideas and values, Randall and his student Justus Buchler wrote, the philosopher can "retain the *ardor* of the historic religions" and "direct this toward social welfare rather than toward the supernatural" (Randall and Buchler 1942, 307; for a more detailed analysis, see Jewett 2011). In the 1940s, the naturalists were involved in a fierce debate with Wilmon Sheldon, the Yale idealist and later author of *Rational Religion: The Philosophy of Christian Love* (1962). Sheldon (1945) accused the Columbia school of overemphasizing empirical methods and argued that science is of little use in the philosophical study of values and other objects in the mental or spiritual domain. The naturalists replied that any appeal to the supernatural "dehumanizes" the study of values. Only an empirical philosophy could do justice to "natural causes and consequences of the value commitments men make" (Dewey et al. 1945, 530).

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[67] Robert Scoon to Ralph Barton Perry, October 11, 1946, box 134, folder 2 (OPRD).

[68] Princeton University Catalogue, 1948–1949, Princeton University Archive.

[69] This section is partly based on Verhaegh (2025).

Prima facie, some similarities exist between the positivists and the naturalists: respect for science, progressive politics, and impatience with traditional metaphysics. However, most Columbia professors viewed the positivists as a greater threat to philosophy than the Christian idealists at Yale. They were convinced that the Vienna Circle's technical, supposedly value-neutral approach "impoverished democracy by isolating philosophers from normative public discourse" (Jewett 2011, 94), and they saw the positivists as "paternalistic" experts who told people what to think, "running things efficiently for them" (Randall 1948, 129). Although they strongly disagreed with Sheldon's claim that the methods of science are "incapable of yielding knowledge of the mental or spiritual" (Dewey et al. 1945, 515), they believed it was more dangerous to suggest that normative claims are cognitively meaningless. Edman viewed the positivists as a "cult" that would "reduce philosophy to a series of definitions, postulates, [and] logical relations" (1934, 477). Randall wrote that the positivists and their analytic companions were the biggest threat to the discipline: "There is no respectable philosophical position today to which I am more opposed than the one known as 'analysis'. . . . I have reluctantly become convinced that 'philosophical analysis' would if it could kill the philosophical enterprise completely. . . . 'Analysis' is opposed to any serious consideration of any of the philosophic issues which seem to me important."[70] In doing so, he actually defended a position very similar to Sheldon, who had "declared war" on the approach of the "young moderns" who aim to dissolve philosophical problems through a "precise analysis of meanings" (Sheldon 1954, 78; Hare 2005, 2206). Morton White, a graduate student at Columbia in the early 1940s, remembers that Randall was "extremely hostile to logical positivism . . . losing no opportunity to put down in a ruthless way any student who showed signs of sympathy" (1999, 30) with the movement.

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[70] John H. Randall Jr. to Sidney Hook, October 25, 1951, container 24.09, SHP.

The only Columbia philosopher who was receptive to the positivists' message was the aforementioned Nagel, who had studied with Carnap in Prague. Although Nagel was a student of Dewey and identified as a naturalist, he believed that the "vigorous and technically precise" methods of the logical empiricists could be "salutary stimuli" to the Columbia school. The Vienna Circle's findings could help the naturalists "re-examine assumptions" on a number of issues on which Dewey and Woodbridge had been "unclear" (Nagel 1956, xii). Nagel shared his colleagues' view that it is philosophy's aim to supply "a radical critique in *all* areas of human concern"—that is, both "beliefs and values"—but saw more potential in the positivists' analytic tools to help clarify and refine "the logical principles involved."[71]

To strengthen Columbia's profile in logic and philosophy of science, Nagel regularly pleaded for new hires. In 1944, he urged the provost to invest more in "foundations of mathematics" and when the philosophers started looking for new people after the war, Nagel recommended Reichenbach.[72] The department's youngest professor had little sway with his senior colleagues, however. His pleas with the provost were not successful, and when he suggested Reichenbach as a candidate professor in a faculty meeting, "the reaction was strongly negative"; the UCLA professor was a philosopher of science, and the department already had a specialist in this field—namely, Nagel himself.[73] Although Columbia's undergraduate logic class had become so popular that it "severely taxed" the department's "staff resources," they were happy to have it taught by an instructor (John Cooley) instead of a full member of faculty.[74] Edman, the department's chair, preferred to hire a "pronounced 'humanist'," and Randall insisted that philosophers "should concern themselves with the problems of men."[75] The department hired six new people in 3 years' time—Justus Buchler, Charles Frankel, Joseph Leon Blau, John R. Everett, Paul Kristeller, and Ernest Moody—and all six had a humanistic approach to philosophy. Moreover, five of the new appointees had a Columbia PhD, much to the annoyance of Nagel, who had long felt that his colleagues were "so damned smug that [they think] all philosophical virtue has been conceived in Morningside Heights."[76]

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[71] "American Philosophers and their Philosophical Credos," ca. 1959, box 2, folder 7, Ernest Nagel Papers (ENP), Columbia University Archives (CUA). See Verhaegh (2021).

[72] Ernest Nagel to Frank D. Fackenthal, April 12, 1944, box 1, folder 6, ENP; Nagel to Frank D. Hook, November 25, 1946, container 22.09, SHP.

[73] Nagel to Hook, November 25, 1946, SHP.

[74] Irwin Edman to Fackenthal, November 11, 1946, box 411, folder 18, Office of the President records, CUA.

[75] Irwin Edman to James Gutmann, May 17, 1945, box 1, James Gutmann Papers; Randall (1953, 12).

As a result of their unwillingness to hire new people with a more technical background, Nagel increasingly began to resent the "machinations" and "hair-raising" decisions of his colleagues.[77] Already in 1944, Randall had seen that individual naturalists had conflicting attitudes "toward the gospel of logical positivism" (1944, 379), but the differences became more and more pronounced in the 1950s. Eventually, we will see (in pt. 2, sec. 4), this smoldering disagreement came to an eruption when Nagel and a small number of like-minded colleagues attempted to block the promotion of yet another 'humanistic' professor with a Columbia background. The department became seriously divided between philosophers who sympathized with the new movement and those who were convinced that philosophical problems are human problems and that it is misleading to address those questions in a strict analytic vacuum.[78] Whereas Nagel and his allies dismissed their colleagues' extreme focus on the humanities, the majority accused them of overemphasizing "the philosophical fashions of the day."[79]

8. Analytic Philosophy

Nagel is not just an important figure because he was the only Columbia philosopher to welcome the positivists. He also played an important role in introducing the term "analytic philosophy" to describe the views of the Vienna Circle and associated groups. Today, we use the label "analytic" to denote a wide range of philosophers and approaches—for example, Gottlob Frege, G. E. Moore, Russell, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Stebbing, the logical empiricists, the Polish logicians, and the Oxford ordinary language philosophers. But in the 1930s, the term was still mostly used to designate a philosophical style that was exclusively associated with the Cambridge school of analysis, in particular Moore and his students (e.g., Montague 1933). It was Nagel who propagated what Alan Richardson (2017, 149, 157) has called a "broad tent" concept of analytic philosophy, bringing

[76] Nagel to Hook, November 25, 1946, SHP.

[77] Ernest Nagel to Sidney Hook, August 17, 1955, container 22.09, SHP.

[78] "Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Promotion of George Kline," ca. May 1959, Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs records, Series I, Office Files, 1939–2006, box 9, folder 6, CUA.

[79] Report of the Committee on the Future Planning of the Philosophy Department, May 25, 1960, box 379, folder 20, Office of the President Records, Series I, Central Files, 1895–1971, CUA.

together under one banner the perspectives he had encountered in "Cambridge, Vienna, Prague, Warsaw, and [Lviv]" on his tour through Europe as a Guggenheim fellow (Nagel 1936, 6). In his two-part paper "Impressions and Appraisals of Analytic Philosophy in Europe," Nagel explained how the philosophers he met were all preoccupied with "philosophy as *analysis*" and how they all took for granted the "body of authentic knowledge acquired by the special sciences" and were concerned "not with *adding* to it . . . but with *clarifying* its meaning and implications" (6).[80]

The first anthologies and handbooks on analytic philosophy appeared in the late 1940s, about a decade after Nagel published his paper. Arthur Pap, a student of Nagel, authored *Elements of Analytic Philosophy*, the first handbook of the movement, including work of "the Carnapians," "the followers of G. E. Moore," "the Wittgensteinians," and the "philosophers who are engaged in the clarification of the foundations of science" (Pap 1949, ix–x). Feigl and Wilfrid Sellars (1949) published a volume titled *Readings in Philosophical Analysis*, which collected important papers from a wide spectrum of philosophers, including Broad, Carnap, Frege, Hempel, Moore, Nagel, Quine, Russell, Schlick, and Tarski. Finally, 1949 is also the year in which the Minnesota school announced the publication of *Philosophical Studies*, "a new journal devoted to the analytic movement in philosophy" (Philosophy and Phenomenological Research 1949). Its first volume, published a year later, included papers on ordinary language, ethical analysis, and Carnap's concept of confirmation, displaying the scope of the analytic approach. Together, these publications greatly popularized the label and helped the movement construct both a stable research program and a shared history. The positivists and their followers, who had always struggled with labels and had proposed a range of names for their movement in the years before—"logical positivism," "logical empiricism," "consistent empiricism," "logistic empiricism," "scientific empiricism," and "scientific philosophy" (see Uebel 2013)—never seem to have protested their inclusion in the "analytic" camp.

What's in a name? Although it is difficult to explain why the term "analytic philosophy" became so popular in the late 1940s, it is clear that this new way of carving up the field had some real-world effects. For one thing, it helped forge a union between formerly independent schools that was much more difficult to ignore by American philosophy departments. Combined, the positivists, the logicians, the Wittgensteinians, and the British analysts represented a more sizeable proportion of the US philosophical community, and it became

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80. Susanne K. Langer (1930, 17, 21) also introduced a broad-tent concept of analytic philosophy in *The Practice of Philosophy*, but her list of examples—Meinong, Husserl, Dewey, Schiller, Peirce, Russell, and Broad—shows that she had a slightly different conception in mind. See Frost-Arnold (2017).

quite common to distinguish between two approaches to philosophy: a traditional, humanistic one, and the analytic, logical, or scientific approach of the new generation. Consequently, it became increasingly problematic for a department not to have a fair share of analytic philosophers on staff. In response to the crisis at Columbia, Jacques Barzun, provost and dean of faculties, recommended that the philosophy department should establish a "balance between 'analysts' and 'humanists'."[81] And Ledger Wood, Scoon's successor as chairman at Princeton, held that an ideal department should have representatives of both "the historical and humanistic aspects of philosophy on the one hand and the logical and scientific on the other."[82] Even Blanshard, known for his opposition to scientific philosophy, recognized that philosophy departments needed "variety in its personnel." Although he doubted whether "symbolic logic belongs in the field of philosophy at all," he adopted a pluralistic strategy after he became chairman at Yale, recognizing that the analytic approach "should be permanently represented on the staff."[83]

A second effect of this novel coalition was that it helped make the new generation's ideas more palatable to the most conservative forces in the field. Young people of a formalist bent who had previously been associated with the views of the 'immoral' positivists could now identify as 'analytic philosophers' and affiliate themselves with a rich tradition that went back to Moore and Russell, two philosophers that were more respected by the old guard. Although Scoon dismissed the positivists as extremists, for example, he had a more favorable view of the first generation of Cambridge and Oxford analysts. He had been happy to invite Moore as a visiting professor to Princeton, when they were short on staff and later described his presence as exceptionally stimulating.[84] Something similar applies to the Columbia naturalists, who invited Moore and Stuart Hampshire as visiting professors in the 1940s and early 1950s. Although the naturalists saw positivism as a threat to philosophy, they had been inspired by Moore's visit and even considered hiring Hampshire as a full professor because the Oxford don would "add power and luster . . . to the reputation of the University, and to philosophy in America."[85] Even positivism itself appeared less threatening when it was repackaged as a possible position within analytic philosophy. Feigl and Sellars (1949) included a chapter by Stevenson alongside two papers by C. D. Broad in their section on "Problems in Theoretical Ethics," and Pap took the sting out of his "emotive theory" by presenting it as one potential answer to the question whether "ethical predicates are definable" (1949, 29).

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[81] Robert Cumming to Ernest Nagel, May 16, 1960, box 1, folder 20, ENP.

[82] Wood to Goheen, February 22, 1960, OPRG.

[83] Brand Blanshard to Marjorie Nicolson, March 1960, box 24, folder 571, BBP.

[84] Robert Scoon to Laurance S. Rockefeller, April 28, 1941, box 133, folder 18, OPRD.

[85] Herbert W. Schneider to Nicholas Murray Butler, November 25, 1942, box 386, folder 16, Office of the President Records, Columbia University Central Files, 1895–1971 (CUCF), CUA; James Gutmann to Grayson Kirk, December 13, 1954, box 437, folder 22, Office of the President Records, CUCF.

In summary, the label "analytic philosophy" appears to have been an important factor in smoothing the transition between two intellectual cultures. The analytic movement as a whole seemed less radical than its positivist subdivision and included so many philosophers that no self-respecting department could justify its exclusion. As such, it facilitated a generational shift that had long been stalled by the effects of the Great Depression and the Second World War. When the old guard—Maritain, Scoon, and Stace at Princeton; Greene and Hendel at Yale; and Edman, Montague, and Schneider at Columbia—were retiring in the 1950s, they were succeeded by a new generation of professors and chairmen who did not perceive analysis as an immediate threat to philosophy. Moreover, we will see that the American student population almost doubled in size in the same decade, requiring departments to hire large numbers of new philosophers, thereby creating more space to hire philosophers with a variety of backgrounds (NCES 2013).

Even some logical empiricists would be given a chance. It was still a big step to hire a 'positivist', but the chairmen of the 1950s were less hostile to the views of Carnap, Feigl, Frank, Hempel, Reichenbach, and their students. Paul Benacerraf, at the time a graduate student at Princeton, remembers his first response when the university hired Hilary Putnam in 1953, a year after Ledger Wood succeeded Scoon as chair of the philosophy department: "Ledger had taken me aside and, in a whisper usually reserved for the most risqué of remarks, informed me that the department had just hired—in his words—a 'logical positivist'. . . . I had barely heard of logical positivists, and the news had been all bad: they were immoral, and opposed to metaphysics. . . . Hilary's appointment was only a 1-year Visiting Assistant Professorship (Princeton was taking no chances, sight unseen). Happily, he was soon judged to be relatively harmless and appointed to a tenure-track position."[86] In the 1940s, Princeton graduate students had had to turn elsewhere to keep up with the newest developments in scientific philosophy. John Rawls, who was interested in logical positivism in his student years, briefly moved to Cornell to study with Max Black (Galisanka 2019, chaps. 2–4) and Nicholas Rescher (2002, 63, 69–70), who had studied with Hempel before enrolling at Princeton, took courses with Church in the mathematics department. To have a student of Reichenbach *within* the philosophy department, therefore, was nothing short of a revolution. Benacerraf recalls how the new, 27-year-old professor quickly revigorated the intellectual culture through his energy and ideas: "For students to see that activity, to feel that throbbing pulse, was to gain a view on philosophy that just wasn't on offer anywhere else."[87] The old-timers had been able to hold their ground in the first years after the war but had been fighting a losing battle.

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[86] See Paul Benacerraf's draft remarks for Putnam's retirement from Harvard, ca. 2000, https://philosophy.princeton.edu/sites/g/files/toruqf2381/files/Benacerraf_Putnam.pdf.

9. Conclusion

Reflecting on the, to him, curious fact that none of his theories received universal recognition when he first proposed them, Max Planck has famously suggested that science progresses one funeral at a time. "A new scientific truth," the physicist wrote, "does not triumph by convincing its opponents and making them see the light, but rather because its opponents eventually die, and a new generation grows up that is familiar with it" (Planck 1949, 33–4). Scientists, Planck realized, are not the impartial observers they have been frequently made out to be. They have a vested interest in preserving their heritage and are inclined to dismiss theories that undermine their academic legacy.

Planck wrote about physics, a field that is known for its broad base of accepted theories. His hypothesis may be even better suited to describe shifts in philosophy, a field notorious for its disagreement about even the most basic of questions. The less consensus about what constitutes good and bad philosophy, the more difficult it will be to convince an established generation that it needs to change its ways. When Harold Dodds, the president who attempted to revive Princeton's philosophy department, tried to determine who are the best philosophers in the country, he quickly discovered that it was difficult to find even two advisors with the same opinion: "If there were some way of getting a reasonable agreement among philosophers as to who the top men are our problem would be simple. . . . Never in all my experience have I found such diversity of opinion as to the abilities of colleagues or such narrow-minded bases of judgement as now obtain among professional philosophers. My respect for them as a group is pretty low."[88] Dodds's questionnaire, sent to 15 external professors, resulted in a list of 26 candidates for a prestigious Princeton professorship and not a single philosopher was mentioned more than three times.[89]

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[87] Benacerraf's draft remarks, ca. 2000; cf. Rescher (2002, 63).

[88] Dodds to Rose, May 29, 1947, letter one of two, OPRD.

[89] "Recommended philosophers," ca. 1947, box 134, folder 3, OPRD; Harold W. Dodds to Nelson Rose, May 29, 1947, letter two of two, box 134, folder 2, OPRD.

Planck's principle has been a prominent building block of postpositivist philosophy of science. Thomas Kuhn used it to support his thesis that "the transfer of allegiance from paradigm to paradigm is a conversion experience that cannot be forced" (1962, 151). Paul Feyerabend referred to it in drawing a connection between science and religion, noting that religious doctrines have been frequently replaced by "killing the representatives of the *status quo*." Although "murder is no longer the accepted method," Feyerabend quipped, "the principle remains" as Planck's hypothesis suggests that "old theories disappear because their defenders die out" (1970, 203). Whereas positivist philosophers of science primarily focused on the logic of science, their successors paid more attention to sociological variables such as age, demography, and geopolitical context in explaining scientific change.

Ironically, the rise of logical positivism itself illustrates the importance of these variables. America's most distinguished philosophers, we have seen, were deeply skeptical about what they deemed to be the Vienna Circle's narrow perspective and immoral views. Although their generation frequently disagreed about the correct approach to philosophy—idealism, realism, pragmatism or neo-Thomism—many of them believed that philosophy is a humanistic discipline and that their field was under severe pressure due to specialization, shrinking student numbers, and the growing popularity of logical positivism. Their students, on the other hand, were much more receptive to the positivists' message. The "GI" generation welcomed Ayer's crisp analyses, Carnap's methodological rigor, and Reichenbach's profound knowledge of modern physics. The positivists advocated a scientific philosophy and seemed to make good on their promise by drawing on or contributing to developments in symbolic logic, the foundations of mathematics, relativity theory, quantum mechanics, and game theory.

In this article, I focused on three philosophy departments: Princeton, Yale, and Columbia. I reconstructed how their faculty viewed the scientific philosophers, and I demonstrated how their biases and opinions affected the departments' hiring policies, tenure decisions, and curriculum designs. Most philosophers at these Ivy League universities believed that the positivists held immoral views and had a narrow conception of philosophy, and they strongly preferred humanistic candidates for junior and senior positions. The old guard mostly hired in their own image and blocked the promotions of scientific philosophers when they were up for tenure. Generational conflicts are not uncommon, Kuhn teaches us, but the clash appears to have been particularly strong in the 1940s. Because departments could appoint very few people during the Depression and World War II, senior philosophers were able to maintain the status quo for quite some time. Only when the old generation retired and student enrollments were on the rise could departments start hiring significant numbers of what by then were called "analytic philosophers."[90]

My conclusions are based on just three departments, but there are good reasons to suppose that similar stories can be told about other universities. Jonathan Strassfeld (2020, 854) has shown that Princeton, Yale, and Columbia were part of a group of seven elite philosophy departments whose graduates accounted for 77.4% of the faculty of America's top schools between 1945 and 1969. It is likely, therefore, that their 'humanistic' curricula strongly affected the intellectual climate within American philosophy more generally. Moreover, there is some evidence that similar generational conflicts played a role at other elite institutions. Morton White, for instance, remembers that the senior professors at Harvard feared that its two youngest members of staff—Quine and Henry Aiken—"would . . . fill the department with positivists" (1999, 104).[91] And when Charles Stevenson visited Stanford in the mid-1940s, he described how some would like to see the department become "more 'humanized'," whereas the aforementioned Dennes, one of the youngest members of staff at Berkeley, hoped to convince the university president "to go in wiser ways."[92]

Eventually, every generation will be replaced by a new one. When the children of the "golden age" approached retirement, analytic philosophers became a much more visible presence in American philosophy departments. Within a decade, the pendulum began to swing to the other extreme. Princeton philosophy, we will see, became an analytic hotspot in just 10 years' time, whereas departments that tried to preserve a more balanced hiring policy, like Columbia and Yale, rapidly lost influence. By the late 1960s, the opposition between humanistic and scientific or analytic philosophy started to be replaced by a divide between analytic and *continental* philosophy, referring to the schools of philosophy that were in vogue across the Atlantic. American philosophy, people believed, just was analytic philosophy.

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[90] These external variables also help explain the differences between the analytic turns in England and United States. The chairmen here discussed—Scoon, Hendel, and Edman—were all born between 1886 and 1896, reaching retirement age in the 1950s. In the United Kingdom, many men of this "lost generation" died in the First World War, such that most colleges were led by older philosophers who needed to be replaced earlier than that (see Rowe 2023, 76–77). At Oxford, for example, the new "analytic" generation (e.g., Gilbert Ryle, J. L. Austin, and A. J. Ayer) emerged in the early 1930s, whereas there were very few positions for similarly aged philosophers in the United States. Naturally, this analysis does not apply to Cambridge, one of the birth grounds of analytic philosophy, where the movement was already institutionally well represented before the World War I.

[91] Compare with Ernest Nagel to Sidney Hook, November 8, 1946, container 24.09, SHP: "Aiken was down from Harvard this afternoon. That dpt [*sic*] is badly split, with Quine, Sheffer and Aiken on one side, Demos, Wild and frequently Williams on the other, and Lewis trying vainly to keep things together."

[92] Charles L. Stevenson to Herbert Feigl, December 2, 1945, 04-17-01, HFP. To what degree the conclusions of this article also apply to universities outside this group of elite universities is a matter for further investigation. The philosophers at the University of Michigan, for example, started hiring analytic philosophers (e.g., Paul Henle, William Frankena, and Stevenson) earlier than their colleagues at Princeton, Yale, and Columbia.

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