

Innovations in Philosophy in the twentieth Century

- New emphasis on the nature and role of language
- Philosophers now work together – a cooperative effort
 - Philosophers formed circles, either explicitly as in the Vienna Circle or casually as in the groups that formed at Oxford and Cambridge
- Main vehicles for philosophical thought was publication in journals (not books)
- All major philosophers are also professors

Philosophy of Language

- Philosophers have always been concerned with language – it is the one tool they have
- Philosophers have always been more or less aware that the structure of language forces us into certain interpretations of the world
- Now trying to solve the problems of “ordinary” language
 - Behind a phrase like “I see a red apple” philosophers see a myriad of possible meanings: I see, red, apple, is it real beyond my mind? is it false if I am dreaming?
 - How does one manage to deny the existence of certain things without asserting their existence in the process of denying it - “The round square does not exist” and Alice’s declaration that “I see Nobody”
 - Philosophers sought to construct an artificial logical language – reflecting the real structure of the world and free of the pitfalls of ordinary language

Logical Atomism

- Russell Bertrand believed it is the philosopher’s job to discover a logically ideal language
 - Such a language would allow for the description of such combinations using logical connectives such as “and” and “or”
- Together with Ludwig Wittgenstein developed:
 - **Logical Atomism** - The theory holds that the world consists of ultimate logical "facts" (or "atoms") that cannot be broken down any further

Bertrand Russell on Logical Atomism “The Philosophy of Logical Atomism” (1918)

- Developed his theory of logical atomism in which the world is said to consist of a complex of logical atoms (such as “little patches of colour” and their properties)
 - Atoms and their properties form the atomic facts
 - Atomic facts are combined to form logically complex objects
- Sense data can be used because they are not wholly a matter of inference: we know when we are too hot or too cold without asking the physicist what heat and cold consist of

- What we normally take to be inferred entities are then understood to be logical constructions formed from the immediately given entities of sensation or sense data
- Two types of knowledge
 - That which is direct, intuitive, certain and infallible
 - That which is indirect, derivative, uncertain and open to error

Ludwig Wittgenstein on Logical Atomism- *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1921)

- **Does not use the term logical atom instead he uses the term proposition** (but same concept)
- Series of numbered paragraphs – often containing no more than a single sentence
 - Seven basic propositions first and last are the best known
 - 1.0 The world is everything that is the case. 1.1 The world is the totality of facts, not of things.
 - 7.0 What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence
- Main concern is the nature of language and its relation to the world
 - The world consists of atomic facts (not objects) which are mirrored by propositions in a logical language
 - Facts are existent states of affairs
 - Atomic states of affairs are combinations of objects
- Complex propositions such as “I see a red apple” must be broken down into elementary (atomic) propositions
- **Elementary (atomic) propositions** consist of names (objects) in immediate combination
 - Assert the existence of atomic states of affairs
 - Every elementary proposition has a truth function; it can be either true or false depending on whether or not it actually reflects an atomic fact
- Fully analyzed propositions will consist of an enormously long combination of **elementary propositions**

Logical Atomism the benefits and problems

- Many philosophical problems could not arise under this method of analysis
 - If I see red now, then the elementary proposition that I see red is true
 - No need to ask whether there exists a red apple or a red rose which has existence as an object independently of my seeing red now
 - Round squares cannot hover in some odd realm of being – no atomic fact which corresponds to a round square
- Logical Atomism excluded more than “round squares” - Job of philosophy is to help people list all the facts of natural science, but if anyone wishes to speak of ethics or political theory, justice or happiness or beauty, the job of the philosopher is to point out that he is talking with signs that have no meaning