**The Vienna Circle**

In 1922 Moritz Schlick (1882-1936) transformed the *Verein Ernst Mach* (Ernst Mach Society), a weekly reading group concerned with logical positivism, into an international assembly of academics known as *der Weiner Kreis*, or the Vienna Circle, which responded to recent developments within analytic philosophy by leading thinkers Bertrand Russell (1872-1970), Gottlob Frege (1848-1925) and Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951). Early members included Rudolf Carnap (1891-1970), Kurt Gödel (1906-1978) and Otto Neurath (1882-1945). In 1929, Neurath published *Wissenschaftliche Weltauffassung. Der Wiener Kreis* (*The Scientific Conception of the World: The Vienna Circle*), a pamphlet delineating the group’s rejection of metaphysics in favour of a scientific worldview predicated upon empirical phenomena. A. J. Ayer (1910-1989) participated in the group from 1932-33, during which he espoused a verification principle that was published in 1936 as *Language, Truth and Logic*. For Ayer, ‘no statement which refers to a “reality” transcending the limits of all possible sense-experience can possibly have any literal significance’ (34). With the onset of World War II, many members immigrated to the United States where logical positivism flourished within the analytic tradition. In 1938, several émigrés proposed a twenty-six volume *International Encyclopedia of Unified Science* that attempted to illuminate the scientific laws underlying all human phenomena. The series was never completed.

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**References and further reading**

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