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# The humanistic context of logical empiricism

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**Abstract:**The Western humanistic trend has deeply influenced the theory and practice of logical empiricism regarding anti metaphysics, unified science, and the concept of the scientific world. The historical reflection on the humanistic context of logical empiricism indicates that the positive interaction between philosophy of science and humanistic culture can add more impetus to the development of philosophy of science.

**Keywords:**logical empiricism; Humanistic context; Scientific humanism

## 1.The humanistic context of anti metaphysics

Logical empiricism is known for its radical stance against metaphysics. However, in the history of philosophy, metaphysics has complex connotations and its referents are vastly different. The main types of metaphysics that logical empiricism opposes are the basic conceptual principles and mechanistic views of nature in modern science without empirical basis, and the German "academic philosophy" that alienates or excludes natural sciences.

The anti metaphysical stance of logical empiricism is closely related to the German Austrian humanistic culture in the early 20th century. It should be noted that although both are German speaking cultural circles, there are still significant differences in the cultural traditions of Austria and Germany. In Austria's humanistic culture, scientific knowledge occupies an important position. Philosophers and scientists represented by Mach and professional philosophers represented by Brentano are the two most influential schools of Austrian humanities and culture. They jointly reject the remaining metaphysics in Kantian philosophy and German idealism, emphasizing the importance of natural scientific methods and language criticism attitudes for philosophy and cultural innovation. The rejection of metaphysics by Austrian humanistic culture mainly stems from the criticism of metaphysics contained in Newtonian classical mechanics by philosophers and scientists represented by Mach and Einstein. In their view, the fundamental concepts and principles of classical mechanics such as absolute spacetime, as well as the mechanical view of nature, lack concrete empirical evidence and are metaphysical beliefs or hypotheses disguised as empirical knowledge. When facing new experiences and experimental results, if these metaphysical dogmas are not corrected or even abandoned, it will hinder the development of scientific knowledge. Philosopher scientists such as Mach and Einstein have sparked a huge wave of anti metaphysics in natural sciences and humanities.

## 2.Unify the humanistic context of science

The advocacy of logical empiricists for science and reason is not only limited to theoretical speculation, but also involves the practical application of scientific rationality to guide the construction of human social culture. The Unified Science Movement vividly reflects the humanistic concerns of logical empiricists at the level of practical rationality. The reason why the Unified Science Movement advocated by logical empiricists flourished in the German Austrian cultural circle is not only in line with the trend of natural science development at that time, but also closely related to the political atmosphere in Germany and Austria. Since the mid-19th century, the demand for German unity among the German speaking nation has been increasing, and the unity of science has been elevated to the heights of political and philosophical ideals. Logical empiricists grew up in this humanistic culture that universally recognizes the unity of

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science. Although logical empiricism strives to distance itself from fanatical political movements, this does not mean that they lack practical concern. In fact, they advocated the theory and practice of "unified science" in the 1930s, with clear political and cultural objectives. Newlat claimed that the Nazi and Catholic propaganda of irrational obscurantism and racism greatly suppressed the freedom of thought and the flourishing of culture. It is necessary to establish a "scientist's republic" that promotes "unified science" through advocating scientism of rationality, progress, and unity, in order to bring true equality, freedom, and universal peace to the world.

Although logical empiricism is closely related to contemporary humanistic culture, its humanistic context has not been fully valued for a long time. This is mainly due to three reasons: firstly, the British philosopher Ayer introduced logical empiricism to the British system in "Language, Truth, and Logic", which had a huge impact on the British and American philosophical circles. However, due to the significant cultural differences between the humanities prevalent in the UK and Europe, Ayer lacked a profound understanding of the humanistic context of logical empiricism. As a result, his introduction ignored the relationship between logical empiricism and its humanistic context, causing a popular misconception in the academic community. Secondly, the rampant McCarthyism in the United States after World War II posed a great threat to logical empiricists such as Carnap who held left-wing political positions. In order to seek self-protection, they have restricted their practice in political culture and limited philosophical research to professional analysis of science and language. The Cold War mentality of the US government and the enormous political pressure brought by McCarthyism to universities have to some extent curbed the humanistic concerns of logical empiricism. Finally, logical empiricists in Europe have almost no close affiliation with the philosophy departments of universities, and most of them belong to the natural sciences or natural philosophy faculty of universities. However, logical empiricists migrated to North America as philosophers and needed to receive teaching positions in universities under the name of the philosophy department. To avoid direct conflict with some conservative philosophical traditions in American colleges, logical empiricism had to soften its radical advocacy of transforming philosophy and culture with science, retreating from the political and cultural practices contained in "Wissenschaft liche Philoso phie" to the professional research of "philosophy of science."