Wiener Kreis Gesellschaft

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Institut Wiener Kreis

8ᵗʰ Arthur Pap Lecture

Luca Oliva

is an assistant professor and the program director of *Liberal Studies* at the University of Houston. His research interests lie in epistemology and philosophy of mathematics but also involve ethics and metaethics. He has primarily published on issues of analytic Kantianism, the a priori in logical empiricism (including Wittgenstein), and Rickert's abstract objects and normativity. His articles have appeared in the *Kantian Review*, the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, and collections published by Cambridge University Press, the North American Kant Society, and De Gruyter.

Oliva teaches theories of knowledge and truth, as well as ethics. In recent years, he has been a lecturer at the University of Vienna (2019) and the Institute Vienna Circle (2015, 2017), an academic visitor at the University of Oxford (2016, 2017), and a visiting professor at the Universities of Insubria (2024) and Bergamo (2015, 2022) in Italy.

Since 2024, Oliva has co-organized the *Reconstructing Carnap* webinar series affiliated with the University of Florence. In 2023, he also initiated the *Ethics and Normativity Seminar Series* at the University of Houston.

Abstract

In 1944, Arthur Pap analyzed different kinds of "a priori" beyond the scientific statements that served as the standard reference for the logical empiricist criticism of the Kantian model. His analysis focuses on the meanings of formal, material, and functional a priori, engaging primarily with the arguments of Aristotle, Kant, Schlick, Wittgenstein, Dewey, and Carnap. In this context, Pap advocates for the reducibility of Kant's synthetic a priori to the material a priori, while also arguing for the consistency of the latter with the functional meaning of the a priori. Oliva's talk will center on the first two meanings. It will specifically analyze Pap's views on Kant's synthetic-analytic distinction, Leibniz's notion of true sentences as identities (which relates to Wittgenstein's notion of tautology), and Hilbert's notion of implicit definitions – adopted by Schlick and defended by Einstein. Oliva will also consider Pap's later writings from 1949 and 1957 and assess the claims concerning analyticity, necessity, and material implication they developed. Supporting references will include works by Shieh (2006), Stump (2011, 2021), Mormann (2021), and Limbeck-Lilienau (2025).

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Kinds of A Priori

Thursday, June 12, 2025
5 pm

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YouTube Livestream:
https://www.youtube.com/live/DMGipA4G1ks

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