CRITIQUE OF LOGICAL POSITIVISM

Paul Gerard Horrigan, Ph.D., 2009.

Logical Positivism

Nineteenth century positivism attempted to dismiss metaphysics as illusory and detrimental to the advancement of the positive sciences (e.g., Comte's three stages), while twentieth century neo-positivism or logical positivism, with its *principle of verification* (which maintains that, aside from the tautological statements of logic and mathematics, meaningful propositions must be verifiable, either directly or indirectly, by sense experience), dismisses metaphysical propositions as meaningless or nonsensical. Logical positivism castigates metaphysics as "nonsense because its sentences "fail to conform to the conditions under which alone a sentence can be literally significant,"[1] namely, sensible verification. Its statements belonged to the category neither of the true nor of the false, but of the meaningless. Linguistic analysis distinguished it sharply from science, regarding it either as a diseased intellectual condition to be cured by the therapy of the linguistic analyst, or as a group of problems that inevitably arise from the use of natural language and that are to be solved by linguistic elucidation."[2] The logical positivists dismissed metaphysics as "an emotional outpouring that should use poetry as its medium, but instead used didactic language in an effort to represent itself as objective truth."[3]

The neo-positivism[4] of the Circle of Vienna,[5] basing itself on the principle of verification, had declared metaphysics, religion, and normative ethics to be nonsensical or meaningless, reducing most of their propositions to the level of irrationalist sentiment or emotive expressions. Metaphysical propositions like "God exists," as well as most of the propositions of religion and normative ethics would, according to logical positivism, be deprived of content inasmuch as every content must be derived from sense experience, and so, for the neo-positivist, affirmations like "God exists" and "the human soul is immortal" are nonsensical. The central thesis of neo-positivism is that the fundamental propositions of metaphysics, ethics, religion, and aesthetics are simply meaningless, for they fail the test of empirical verifiability.

Neo-positivism or logical positivism is an attempt to establish the validity of what man knows by an analysis of what he says. After all, man's knowledge of reality is expressed in propositions, so that a linguistic analysis should reveal whether a given proposition is meaningful

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[1] A. J. AYER, *Language, Truth, and Logic*, London, 1946, p. 35.
[2] J. OWENS, *An Elementary Christian Metaphysics*, Center for Thomistic Studies, Houston, 1985, p. 10.
[3] *Ibid.*
[4] G. MORRA, *Il problema morale nel neopositivismo*, Lacaita, Manduria, 1962.
[5] The Circle of Vienna (*Wiener Kreis*), initiated in 1895 as a chair of the philosophy of the inductive sciences in the University of Vienna which went to Ernst Mach, who taught a series of courses there until 1901. In 1922 the chair went to Moritz Schlick (1882-1936), who, together with a number of like-minded philosopher-physicists, published in 1929 *The Scientific Vision of the World: The Circle of Vienna* (*Wissenschaftliche Weltauffassung: der Wiener Kreis*), which became the group's manifesto. Aside from Schlick, members of the group included Rudolf Carnap (its most celebrated theorist), Kurt Gödel, Otto Neurath, Hans Reichenbach, Richard von Mises, Gustav Hempel, Karl Menger, Hans Hahn, Friedrich Herbert Waismann, and Victor Kraft.

1

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Guillaume Favre

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Herbert David Croly,1908 **Nursing Research, Holism, and Philosophies of Science** Francelyn Reeder,1986 **Twentieth-Century Philosophy** Morris Weitz,1966 From Simon Schuster and edited by Morris Weitz 20th Century Philosophy The Analytic Tradition is a collection of readings in the history of philosophy The full scope and impact of Western philosophy from the Presocratics to the important thinkers of the twentieth century are presented in this original paperback series Logical analysis and history of philosophy ,2004 **Unitas** ,1926 **Canadian - American Slavic Studies** ,1977 A quarterly journal devoted to Russia and East Europe **History and Its Theories** Dr. Rajendra Raskar,2023-08-01 History is the study of past events evolving through various theories like Marxist Great Man and Annales shaping our understanding of human civilization s development A New Mind for Policy Analysis Goktug Morcol,2002-12-30 Morcol argues that the objectivist and deterministic assumptions of mainstream policy analysis which are based on the Newtonian positivist worldview or mind set should be transcended After demonstrating that the favored methods of mainstream policy analysis are based on Newtonian ontological and positivist epistemological assumptions and that the connections between these two are intimately and historically related he critically assesses and highlights the contributions of quantum mechanics complexity theory and cognitive science to a new mind set in scientific knowledge a post Newtonian and postpositivist mind set Newtonian positivist and post Newtonian postpositivist worldviews are conceptualized as fuzzy mind sets that is they are not mutually exclusive and that they share assumptions at varying degrees Cognitive science shows that some of the fundamental concepts and assumptions of the Newtonain positivist philosopy such as the concept of causality and the tendency to categorize reality reductionist thinking are the products of the evolutionary adaptation of the human mind and they have become its built in defaults As Morcol suggests we cannot change the biological defaults of our minds but we can change our way of thinking to an extent through a cultural evolution He argues that conscious efforts can be made in policy analysis education to help move our thinking toward a post Newtonian and postpositivist policy analysis Of particular interest to scholars and advanced students dealing with policy analysis public administration and political science especially those concerned with epistemology and methodology *LIVING ISSUES IN PHILOSOPHY* HAROLD H. TITUS,1964 **Journal of Research** Agra University,1973 **The Theory and Method of Political Analysis** Eugene J. Meehan,1965 **The British Journal for the Philosophy of Science** ,1952 Quests Old and New George Robert Stow Mead,1913 *Roy Wood Sellars as Creative Thinker and Critic* Arthur W. Munk,1972

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Table of Contents Critique Of Logical Positivism

1. Understanding the eBook Critique Of Logical Positivism
    - The Rise of Digital Reading Critique Of Logical Positivism
    - Advantages of eBooks Over Traditional Books
2. Identifying Critique Of Logical Positivism
    - Exploring Different Genres
    - Considering Fiction vs. Non-Fiction
    - Determining Your Reading Goals
3. Choosing the Right eBook Platform
    - Popular eBook Platforms
    - Features to Look for in an Critique Of Logical Positivism
    - User-Friendly Interface
4. Exploring eBook Recommendations from Critique Of Logical Positivism
    - Personalized Recommendations
    - Critique Of Logical Positivism User Reviews and Ratings
    - Critique Of Logical Positivism and Bestseller Lists
5. Accessing Critique Of Logical Positivism Free and Paid eBooks
    - Critique Of Logical Positivism Public Domain eBooks
    - Critique Of Logical Positivism eBook Subscription Services

- Integration of Multimedia Elements
- Interactive and Gamified eBooks

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