

Example of essay on popper and logical positivism

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When making statements regarding facts or the possibility of fact, they are often looked at through a certain mindset. One may believe that a statement should be true unless proven otherwise, or one may think that a statement should always be seen with a degree of skepticism. This dichotomy, in terms of philosophy, is often indicative of the tug of war found between the ideas of logical positivism and Karl Popper's criterion of falsifiability. In this essay, we will examine the primary contrasts between the two philosophies, and why Popper so ardently disagrees with the concept of logical positivism.

Logical positivism claims that empirical evidence and knowledge are, effectively, the same thing - formal logic is used to form what is considered a concrete view of the world that is thought to be inexorably true (Carnap, 1928). Verificationism is a very important part of this concept - according to positivists, when a statement is made, it can be proven. This proof can be found either through empirical evidence or analysis of what is presented to them. Logical positivism, on the whole, presents a very simplistic and truncated view of the world and empirical science - if it exists, one can prove that. According to positivism, " The aim of scientific effort is to reach the goal, unified science, by applying logical analysis to the empirical material" (Vienna Circle, p. 5).

Karl Popper held an incredible objection to logical positivism, based on several fundamental flaws he saw in the philosophy. For him, there was a substantial problem of demarcation when collecting statements - one could be confused as to what was said scientifically or nonscientifically (Sober, p. 12). In *Logik der Forschung*, Popper maintained that verifiability as a criterion was far too strong to be used for the field of science, since there needed to

be some doubt as to the meaning of statements (Popper, 1929). By verifying inductive inferences, there were all manner of philosophical issues that would arise - namely, that a theory would be claimed to be proven, though Popper thought it could never be.

Instead, Popper offers the concept of falsifiability - with this concept, a hypothesis or theory is allowed to be contradicted or disproven over the course of the experiment. According to this concept, scientific methodology leans toward a negative view of a theory which posits the possibility of it being false. For example, if a hypothesis states that 'All elephants are gray,' falsifiability would infer that it is possible that there is the possibility of finding an elephant that is not grey. Statements can be theoretically falsifiable, according to Popper - to him, falsifiability is a much more accurate and reasonable way to approach scientific methodology. Falsifiability does not create the expectation of a proven theory, but only attempts to verify its potential falsehood.

In conclusion, there are chief differences between logical positivism and falsifiability, as they are essentially contradictory in their philosophy. Logical positivism states that, if a statement cannot be proven by empirical evidence, then it is false. However, falsifiability states that there is room for doubt in all statements, and that this assumption must be made before any others. Otherwise, some positive statements might be considered true when they are not - through this constant doubting, Popper strives to never be sure about a scientific statement, and to keep possibilities open.

References

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