

Philosophy 2180

Assignment 1

In Hempel's paper "the logical analysis of psychology," we find a leading proponent of logical positivism explaining how this theory can be applied to the domain of psychology. The paper provides a fairly clear outline of how psychological terms can be understood within a positivist framework. We also find Hempel responding to several candidate objections to his proposal.

The aim of this assignment is to help students understand the theory of logical positivism, as well as the challenges that it faced, by carefully assessing Hempel's proposal. I also want students to practice the method of argument reconstruction and analysis, and to practice generating objections to a position.

Your short essay will contain four sections, each one responding to one of the questions below. The paper should be approximately 3 pages. A little longer or shorter is okay, but try to be concise- answer the way you would on an exam.

1. First, explain why psychological statements pose a potential challenge for logical positivism. That is, why would a positivist like Hempel even consider it important investigate whether psychology qualifies as a genuine science? Try to answer this question in your own words, without simply paraphrasing Hempel's statements. Illustrate the point by coming up with your own example of a typical psychological statement, explaining why a positivist might be suspicious of whether it is meaningful.
2. Using the example statement that you generated in the previous section, briefly illustrate how Hempel would analyze its meaning.
3. On page 169 of the article, Hempel presents an argument from analogy that compares psychological statements to the way that one might describe the operation of a watch (look for the section of text that is marked by lines). Spell out this analogical argument in premise and conclusion form.
4. Towards the end of the essay, Hempel responds to several potential objections to his analysis. In other words, he imagines how an opponent of his position might criticize him and then responds to that criticism. In the final section of your paper, your job is to take up the position of his imaginary opponent by coming up with further a counter-argument to one of his responses. Choose any one of Hempel's responses. It might help to focus one that you find the most problematic.

This assignment is to be submitted by Courselink before 6 pm on September 23. No late assignments will be graded without prior notification.