



Logical Empiricism: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives

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Logical empiricism, a program for the study of science that attempted to provide logical analyses of the nature of scientific concepts, the relation between evidence and theory, and the nature of scientific explanation, formed among the famed Vienna and Berlin Circles of the 1920s and '30s and dominated the philosophy of science throughout much of the twentieth century. In recent decades, a "post-positivist" philosophy, deriding empiricism and its claims in light of more recent historical and sociological discoveries, has been the ascendant mode of philosophy and other disciplines in the arts and sciences.

This book features original research that challenges such broad oppositions. In eleven essays, leading scholars from many nations construct a more nuanced understanding of logical empiricism, its history, and development, offering promising implications for current philosophy of science debates.

Tapping rich resources of unpublished material from archives in Haarlem, Konstanz, Pittsburgh, and Vienna, contributors conduct a deep investigation into the origins and development of the Vienna and Berlin Circles. They expose the roots of the philosophy in such varied sources as Cassirer, Poincaré, Husserl, Heidegger, and Wittgenstein. Important connections between the empiricists and other movements--neo-empiricism, British empiricism--are vigorously explored.

Building on these historical studies, a critical reevaluation emerges that shrinks the distance between old and new philosophers of science, between "analytic" and "Continental" philosophy. A number of compelling recent debates, including those involving Kuhn, Feyerabend, Hesse, Glymour, and Hanson, are reopened to show the ways in which logical empiricist theory can still be validly applied.

Logical Empiricism is the result of a remarkable conference, convened in the spirit of reflection and international cooperation, that took place in Florence, Italy, in 1999.

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