

Suggested answers to the exam in June 2012 on the Philosophy of science.

It should be noted that the exam is in philosophy of science so arguments for your answer are of vital importance.

1. *Would you characterize the paper as dealing with the context of discovery or the context of justification?* The distinction is central to the logical positivists. In fact, most of the paper is concerned with a new research agenda suggesting that future discoveries might be found.
2. *Would you characterize the paper as normal science?*
This is a reference to Kuhn and his ideas about the evolution of science, see Lecture 6. The paper accepts the standard economic arguments and employs standard techniques but is unusual to the extent that the emphasis is on a new research agenda. But there are certainly no novel facts in the Kuhnian sense so it is definitely normal science.
3. *Does the paper belong to the category of positive or normative science?* Some sections are positive descriptions of empirical or theoretical work, and that would be positive science. The research agenda “We ought to look at these questions” could be said to be of a normative character.
4. *In section I, the author uses an analogy to the travel agents. Is this a legitimate scientific argument?* It would certainly not have appeared to be legitimate by the logical positivists but it could be seen in the light of the rhetoric by McCloskey as a way of convincing the reader, see lecture 9.
5. *In section 3, the author uses a simple economic model to demonstrate a point with respect to optimal copyright term. He uses a set of simplified assumptions. Is this a legitimate economic procedure?* The answer is hopefully yes as it is the standard procedure in economics! The answer to this question could be based on Friedman’s idea of the irrelevance of assumptions. However, Friedman would suggest a prediction that could be confirmed or disconfirmed by observation but this is not the case in the present model.
6. *In section IV, the author notes p. 340: Because consumers have no interest in travel agents per se but are instead interested in travel, observers would conclude that the decline in travel agent employment was not a problem to be solved but instead a happy consequence of technological change. How would you relate that statement to standard welfare theory?* Standard welfare theory would suggest that if the winners of the new technology could compensate the loser, then the new technology is beneficial to society according to the Kaldor-Hicks compensation criteria, see lecture 19. However, in this case no compensation is even considered.
7. *In section IV, the author uses the title A Research Agenda. How would you relate that to philosophy of science?*

This fits nicely into the research programme by Lakatos, see lecture 5.

8. *In the terms of McCloskey, are you persuaded by the paper and the conclusion?* The idea of McCloskey is presented in lecture 9. The author does give some convincing arguments but one might have a slight skepticism as the research programme would seem to be biased towards one part of the ongoing struggle on copyright.