

## **Empiricism Unchained**

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Empiricism has a long and venerable history. Aristotle, the Epicureans, Sextus Empiricus, Francis Bacon, Locke, Hume, Mill, Mach and the Logical Empiricists, among others, represent a long line of historically influential empiricists who, one way or another, placed an emphasis on knowledge gained through the senses. In recent times the most highly articulated and influential edition of empiricism is undoubtedly Bas van Fraassen's constructive empiricism. Science, according to this view, aims at empirically adequate theories, i.e. theories that save all and only the observable phenomena. Roughly put, something is observable in van Fraassen's view if a member of the human epistemic community can detect it with their unaided senses. Critics have contested this notion, citing, among other reasons, that most of what counts as knowledge in natural science concerns things that are detectable only with instruments, i.e. things that are unobservable and hence unknowable by van Fraassen's lights. Beg-the-question accusations fly back and forth. As a consequence a stalemate has ensued. In this talk, I put forth a liberalised conception of observability and an associated, and accordingly liberalised, conception of empiricism. 'Universal observability' and 'universal empiricism', as I call them, unchain themselves from traditional conceptions of experience while remaining firmly tethered to what, I argue, is the true source of epistemic merit in the senses.