

**Ecumenical Empiricism**  
Ioannis Votsis  
University of Duesseldorf

Empiricism has been a pivotal philosophical topic for more than two millennia. Several Sophists, Aristotle, the Epicureans, Sextus Empiricus, Francis Bacon, Locke, Hume, Mill, Mach and the Logical Empiricists represent a long line of historically influential empiricists who share a prioritising of the sensory over all other forms of knowledge. The latest influential incarnation, Bas van Fraassen's constructive empiricism, takes science to aim at empirically adequate theories, i.e. theories that save all and only the observable phenomena. Roughly put, an object or phenomenon is observable in van Fraassen's view if a properly functioning member of the human epistemic community can detect it via their unaided senses. Scientific realists and other critics have contested this notion citing among other reasons that most knowledge in natural science concerns objects that can only be detected with instruments, i.e. those 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 the scientific realism debate.

In this paper, I put forth a broader conception of observability that seeks to allay the realist's concerns about knowledge in natural science yet panders to vital empiricist sensitivities. Along with the new conception of observability I propose a new form of empiricism. Ecumenical empiricism, as I call it, divorces itself from traditional conceptions of experience while remaining wedded to the idea that reliable detection of our surroundings has precedence over all other forms of knowledge.