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### **‘The Nature of Morality’ in Gilbert Harman: An Appraisal** **Oyedola, David A**

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#### **Abstract**

*This study examines Gilbert Harman’s submission that moral beliefs are incapable of the sort of empirical confirmation characteristic of scientific beliefs, in his work, ‘The Nature of Morality.’ This study argues that the incapability of moral beliefs to be empirically confirmed characteristic of scientific beliefs, as espoused by Harman, has not undermined the nature of moral beliefs and the existence of moral universe. Nevertheless, the study concedes that the fact that Harman’s grounds are appealing, his claim is insufficient. The study will conclude that moral beliefs cannot be reduced to nothingness: because they (moral beliefs) need not be empirically confirmed; a formal relationship between moral beliefs and empirical confirmation is not a matter of necessity; and, they (moral beliefs) have independent existence from scientific observation. The method of philosophical exposition and analysis will be employed.*

**Key Words:** *Morality, Science, Confirmation, Moral universe, Empirical universe.*

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**Background Analysis:** In recent years, the incapability of moral beliefs to be empirically confirmed characteristic of scientific beliefs has been gaining currency. W.V.O Quine is a major exponent, while Gilbert Harman is a mentee of Quine; moral beliefs, he (Harman) believes, cannot be confirmed or disconfirmed using empirical verification. His work on ‘The Nature of Morality’ is ardent to ascertaining this position.

However, the goal of this study is to test whether moral beliefs are incapable of empirical confirmation characteristic of scientific beliefs. This study intends to know the distinctive features of empirical observation that makes it so persuasive or puissant to reduce moral beliefs to nothingness. In response to this potency, this study opines that, what is so distinctive of empirical confirmation is the view about the relations among the problems inherent in Harman’s conclusion that moral beliefs cannot be empirically confirmed.

**Morality and Science: Terms and Adherents:** Some philosophers like William V.O Quine, Alfred J. Ayer, Hilary Putnam, Gilbert Harman, Ernie Lepore, and so forth, have argued, using the criteria that since moral beliefs fail to satisfy the basic tenets of empirical observation, morality ought to be reduced to nothingness; while some other philosophers like Carl Stevenson, Carl Wellman, Ronald Lindsay, Folke Tersman, Sam Harris, H.P. Grice, P.F. Strawson, etc, have argued that since the methodology used in morality is different from that of science, morality is independent of science because it has its own terms, adherents, universe, and that, its objectivity lie within its own framework.

Juxtaposing the views of different philosophers will help to underscore the notion that, it is a possibility that some philosophers be restricted to the moral framework where moral beliefs are real, and, that they are out there independent of the mind of empirical skeptics. It is also a possibility that some philosophers be restricted to the scientific framework where moral beliefs are incapable of the sort of empirical confirmation characteristic of scientific beliefs. As a result of these possible restrictions, there are opposing arguments which have been put forward by moral philosophers and philosophers of science. These positions bother on what the nature of morality is, as different from what the nature of science entails. Claims were made concerning which one between science and morality can be defended, and conclusions have been derived. For a philosopher to choose which one to restrict himself is solely dependent on the kind of conviction he has.

**Moral and Scientific Confirmations:** We turn, finally, to the difficulties said to confront moral beliefs from the empirical observation's point of view, because the moral beliefs to which adherents of morality are committed not only colour the contents of their findings but also control their assessment of the moral evidence on which they base their conclusions. Since those who believe in the independence of moral beliefs do not differ in their commitments to morality, it will be sufficient to conceive that moral beliefs are capable of being confirmed in the moral sense, despite what Harman views.

However, it is accordingly absurd to expect moral beliefs to exhibit the unanimity so common among natural scientists concerning what are the established facts and satisfactory explanations for them. This is predicated on the view that value-neutrality that seems to be so pervasive in the natural sciences, is therefore often held to be impossible in morality. Thus, the alleged role of moral judgments in (i) the selection of problems for ethical discourse, (ii) the determination of the contents of conclusions among moral philosophers, (iii) the identification of moral facts, and (iv) the assessment of moral evidence, is not present in science or empirical confirmation. These four reasons create a form of objectivity for moral beliefs.

This study is not restricted to Gilbert Harman's school of thought where moral beliefs are incapable of the sort of empirical confirmation characteristic of scientific beliefs; or, to the logical positivist school where any meaningful statement must be verifiable in principle, or at least in practice. Similarly, this study is not restricted to the moral realist school where there are objective moral facts or methodology in the moral universe. Furthermore, this study is not restricted to moral anti-realism school where there are no objectively moral values. The major reason why this study is not restricted to any school of thought is because of the inherent problems that are embedded in each position. This study is more inclined to accept or defend the view that the methodologies of the schools of science and morality are independent of each other, not necessarily side by side but on their own right without one having to reduce the other to nothingness. The normative questions that philosophical ethics or moral beliefs ask are independent of the descriptive questions that science endeavours to ask, study, or know.

Are they (moral beliefs and empirical observation) necessarily opposed to each other? The response is dependent on the conviction of any philosopher. However, empirical realism shows that the world out there is precipitated on empirical verification, but this realism makes science to be suffering from a fundamental problem; aiding and abetting; that is, scientific realism attempts to subjugate all other disciplines to do their enterprise using empirical language; disciplines outside scientific discourse must be verifiable in principle, or at least in practice. Conceptually, the terms 'empirical observation' and 'moral beliefs' belong to different schools with different practitioners, different field works, and system of practice where empirical observation cannot enter nor use its tools. Moreover, the things that the proponent of moral beliefs selects for study are determined by the conception of what are morally important facts, propositions and values.

The need for opposition is not needed in the first place, but there is. The place of science is settled in the real world while the usage of ethical terms, judgments or propositions underscores the importance of morality for human co-habitation. Thus, it is worthy to note that neither science nor morality can sufficiently reduce their opposing claims to nothingness. There are moral terms, and they are different from the terms used in science. This suggests that moral beliefs are not opposing to scientific terms; they do not overlap. Would there be any need or call for moral confirmation of issues that science deal with? This is acceptable. It will only entail the need to settle disputes which arise in scientific enterprise that calls for moral evaluation if it affects human beings and human society. For instance, the creation of atomic bombs and missiles would call for moral evaluation when it enters the stage of testability or usage within the human or animal community. Is there a sufficient call for moral beliefs to be tested by empirical observation? There is no call that is sufficient enough for such test because they are two different fields of human endeavours.

**Moral Beliefs in Harman's Ethical Theory:** Harman's position is that "moral beliefs are incapable of the sort of empirical confirmation characteristic of scientific beliefs" (Harman, 2006: 625). Here, Harman fails to recognize that moral beliefs do not need to be empirically confirmed, and that moral beliefs do not need scientific or empirical testability. The orientation towards moral values is always inherent when a moral philosopher is choosing material for investigation.

Against moral beliefs, the central aim of empirical science, according to Harman, is that observation plays a role in science that it does not seem to play in ethics (Harman, 627). Harman presents some tenets of scientific beliefs against moral beliefs; one, moral principles cannot be tested and confirmed in the way scientific principles can. Two, observation plays a role in science that it does not seem to play in ethics. Three, the truth or falsity of the moral belief or observation seems to be completely irrelevant to any reasonable explanation of why that observation was made. Four, you can observe someone do something, but the rightness or wrongness of what the person does cannot be perceived. Five, morality is simply, an illusion or a superstitious remnant of religion, because ethics is cut off from observational testing in a way that science is not. Moral judgments do not seem to help explain observations. Six, ethics remains problematic. This is because “the reduction of moral facts to facts about interests, roles and functions would be complex, vague and difficult to specify” (Harman, 626-634). This point implies that there is no naturalistic reduction of moral facts.

Point (i) is a clear distinction of facts between science and morality, and it is also descriptive. Point (ii) denies the presence of scientific form of observation in morality. The point is contested by moral philosophers because there is no necessary call for a comparison. Point (iii) calls for inseparation between what moral observations actually are and what is morally observed. The point in (iv) to (vi) restates the central thesis of science or empirical observation – the denial of moral beliefs. In view of these points, the denial of the nature of morality is in perfect agreement with Harman’s.

Harman claims that moral beliefs are fundamentally non-testable the way scientific principles can: “scientific experiments or hypotheses can be tested in real experiments, out in the world. You can observe someone do something, but you can never observe or perceive the rightness or wrongness of what he does” (Harman, 626). No moral belief system or observation can actually tell us anything or something specific or real in the world the way scientific observation can. However, Robert Sinclair is opposed to Harman’s view. He (Sinclair) opines that different fields of study celebrate their methodologies, and they use different scripts to analyze the situations in and around their world (Sinclair, 2012: 336).

**Harman and the Incapacitation of Moral Beliefs:** In relation with the long-standing problem between science and morality as a derivative of the scientific perception of moral philosophy or ethics, Harman underscores a point which his predecessors in the school of logical positivism like Ayer, Schlick, Carnap, Quine, Nagel, etc, have supported. This view is that moral beliefs are incapable of empirical observation characteristic of science. Harman’s analytic support, is that “we make certain assumptions about physical facts to explain the occurrence of the observations that support a scientific theory” (Harman, 627). Although Harman presented a thought-experiment about a choice to be made between five people alive and one dead, but he asks “can moral principles be tested in the same way we test scientific outcomes, out in the world?” (Harman, 626). His answer lay in the non-verifiability or testability of moral principles in the real world because, in the order of Quine, it can be seen that “moral judgments, though are not responsive to observation, they lack cognitive content. This involves two main sentences. First, no moral belief or judgments qualify as observation sentences. Two, moral judgments contribute nothing to theories that are testable against non-moral observation sentences” (Tersman, 1987: 764-765). (If any of two assumptions above were false, then Quine’s views on cognitive meaning would imply that moral judgments are indeed cognitive. For instance, a moral judgment would count as cognitive if it would be an essential member of a set of sentences that implies and therefore is testable against certain compounds of observation sentences (‘observation categoricals’), or if it were ‘suggested by considerations of simplicity and symmetry and can be useful indirectly in suggesting further hypotheses which do admit of testing’) (Tersman, 1987)

Harman’s support of scientific observation is based on some academic evidence and what this study would call, certain extremities. In Harman’s view, it is worth pointing out that in the second sense of observation (observation in terms of thinking a thought), moral principles or beliefs cannot clearly be tested by observation (Harman, 628). It is possible to agree that moral observation is central to morality, while empirical observation is central to science. This point is appealing, and Harman fails to see this. In Harman’s view, morality, unlike science, seems to be cut off from observation. But does the term 'observation' have to be sufficiently empirical or scientific? Harman fails to address this fundamental problem.

Although Harman's point in support of empirical observation is germane, it evades the issue that is of primary concern to morality or moral beliefs, namely, the existence of moral universe. The tenets of this universe are different from the tenets of empirical observation. The acceptance of the existence of the moral universe does little or no harm to the appropriate empirical questions or issues the moral practice itself could generate. Whether it is sufficient that we reduce moral beliefs to absurdity remains legitimate even if the entire world believes that moral beliefs should be subsumed under empirical observation. The above view is legitimate even if the scientific or empirical evidences show that science is superior to morality because of the presence of empirical observation. Scientific observation is admirable: whatever does not fulfill the observational means of verification should be reduced to absurdity. According to J.O. Famakinwa, any human observation is theory laden (Famakinwa, 2012: 29). The term 'human observation' here, is not monolithic. It can be empirical, moral, political, or theoretical. Following Harman, Famakinwa asserts that the evaluation of human actions or omissions (or dealings with either nature or society) depends on the theory the assessor endorses (Famakinwa, 29). The implication which Famakinwa's assertion has on Harman's view is that it is not sufficient to assert that moral beliefs are incapable of the sort of empirical confirmation characteristic of scientific beliefs. If science succeeds in doing so, it (science) would be creating a monolithic view of observation, whereas observation can be explained in many phases or ways. If observation is not monolithic, then, moral beliefs can be morally observed within the world of the adherents of moral beliefs.

**Harman's Objections against Moral Beliefs:** Two key objections are central to Harman's argument against moral beliefs: one, moral beliefs and their lack of empirical confirmation; and two, the reduction of moral beliefs to nothingness. Harman's reason for bringing these objections is to be able to assert the primacy of empirical confirmation over and above moral beliefs. However, his claim suffers from hasty generalization. If moral beliefs are empirically confirmed, it means that the moral universe would cease to exist, and moral philosophers would become descriptive ethicists. There will not be any need again for normative ethics and meta-ethics, as branches of moral philosophy. However, the link between these objections lay on Harman's quest to show the invalidity of moral beliefs and their incapacitation for usefulness for any human enterprise. Below, we examine these objections.

On the first objection, Harman's quest is to show that moral beliefs cannot be empirically confirmed because it implies the acceptance of the possibility of practice without empirical verification. The consequence of this implication is that, for moral beliefs to be empirically acceptable, they have to come to terms with empirical observation. If moral beliefs come to term with empirical observation, it will place moral beliefs on empirical test as if moral beliefs can be verified empirically, to begin with. This will not work. Harman asks, "*can moral principles be tested and confirmed in the way scientific principles can?*" (Harman, 625). His answer is that moral beliefs cannot be tested, and thus, are not out there in the world to be empirically verified. This is because we cannot perceive the rightness or wrongness of whatever we do or whatever happens in the empirical way. This study is inclined to assert that Harman is trying to say that moral evaluation cannot be carried out through the empirical observational means. For instance, the understanding of the moral beliefs does not influence empirical means of understanding the world. Harman posits that moral observation through moral beliefs is not plausible because it makes the borrowing of moral beliefs for empirical means impossible. The moral borrowing for empirical means cannot plausibly stand due to genuine scientific appreciation of facts as different to the way morality appreciates facts. Harman concludes that a proponent of moral beliefs attempting to use empirical means cannot in any way influence the moral universe. But in a different way, there is Harman's admittance that "what you perceive depends to some extent on the theory you hold consciously or unconsciously" (Harman, 626), and this represent an indirect means of saying that empirical observation cannot outrightly overturn moral practice since they are necessarily different but not sufficiently opposing fields of human endeavour.

As Harman observes, "moral concepts – Right and Wrong, Good and Bad, Justice and Injustice – also have a place in the theory or system of beliefs and are the concepts they are because of their contexts" (Harman, 626). This suggests that Harman appreciates the importance of contexts. What I mean is that, he (Harman) understands the moral context as different but not opposing to the scientific

context. Despite this admittance, Harman still concede that “observation plays a role in science that it does not seem to play in ethics” (Harman, 631). The usage of the word ‘observation’ for science alone is too inclusive. There is scientific observation as different but not opposing to moral observation. Similarly, the argument between science and morality is not of superior-inferior discourse. Thus, Harman’s rejection of moral observation or beliefs is seen as follows; *a moral observation does not seem, in the same sense, to be observational evidence for or against any moral theory, since the truth or falsity of the moral observation seems to be completely irrelevant to any reasonable explanation of why that observation was made* (Harman, 627).

What follows from here is the reinstatement of the two senses of observation, where moral observation, for Harman, might explain observations in the first sense, but not in the second sense of observation. In the first sense of observation, moral principles can be tested by observation. This form of observation, this study will call moral observation (this view does not belong to Harman but meant to show that the term ‘observation’ is not essentially monolithic). But in the second sense of observation, moral beliefs cannot clearly be tested by observation - where this form of observation is empirical, since moral principles do not seem to help explain your observing what you observe (Harman, 628). Harman conceives moral beliefs as an explanatory theory, in which morality, unlike science, seems to be off from observation. Is it possible for morality to be cut off from observation? From the point of view of this study, moral beliefs cannot be entertained when empirical observation is used, because moral beliefs cannot be explained if we use empirical confirmation. Harman submits that *there does not seem to be observational evidence, even indirectly, for basic moral principles. We never seem to use purely moral assumptions to refer to any state in the real world* (Harman, 629). Harman’s submission is an emanation from observation in mathematics. His usage of mathematics, in this regard, as it correlates with empirical observation reduces moral beliefs to nothingness.

On the second objection, Harman considers nihilism. He explained the logical relationship between the reduction of moral beliefs to nothingness and nihilism using the following analysis; “moral hypotheses do not help explain why people observe what they observe. So, ethics is problematic and nihilism must be taken seriously” (Harman, 629). Why did Harman use nihilism (the doctrine that there are no moral facts, no moral truths, and no moral knowledge)? His aim is to disprove or disapprove of moral beliefs. Nihilism is against moral realism (the doctrine that there are moral facts, moral truths, and that there are moral knowledge). He attempts to use nihilism to substantiate his view that morality has no place in observation, where the second sense of observation is what matters. Similarly, he used nihilism, neglecting moral realism to substantiate his thesis that moral beliefs are incapable of the sort of empirical confirmation characteristic of scientific beliefs. If this study is inclined to follow this view, it suggests that there are moral beliefs (or, facts), but it is, however, the case that, they are incapable of empirical confirmation characteristic of scientific beliefs. It is worthy to note that there are moral beliefs, and that is why Harman asserts that they cannot be tested by observation in the empirical sense. It is possible that he might be mistaken. If there are moral beliefs but they lack empirical confirmation, and if there is nihilism, his usage of nihilism would contradict the existence of moral beliefs, which are only incapable of empirical confirmation characteristic of scientific beliefs. As it can be seen Harman’s claim is insufficiently asserted. This failure makes his usage of nihilism unwarranted, while his reduction of moral beliefs to nothingness is baseless. *To expect moral judgments to be of help in explaining observations is to be confused about the function of morality* (Harman, 630), he maintains, not minding the failures that such judgment entails.

The problem that Harman fails to see, arising from the analysis above is that, observation cannot be solely scientific, and when empirical observation cannot help us to explain moral beliefs, it does not sufficiently follow that moral beliefs amount to nothingness. Harman is attempting to make an absolutist claim that scientific observation is the only form of observation that exist, or that it must be used to guide all other aspects of observation. I think he fails to understand the problem with this criterion. The empirical observation cannot, in the strict sense of the word *confirmation*, confirm itself.

In support of Harman, Quine admits that moral beliefs, as compared with science are methodologically infirm (Quine, 1981: 63). Quine’s view suggests that ethics lacks the responsiveness of being corresponded with scientific observational truth. According to Tersman, Quine’s assertion that “moral judgments differ from cognitive ones in their relation to observation”

(Tersman, 1987: 764), may have influenced Harman's submission. Quine's reasons for admitting that moral beliefs are not responsive to observation, according to Tersman, are based on the following; observation sentences are occasion sentences. They are accepted on some occasions and rejected on others (i.e., 'It's raining', 'That's a rabbit'), while some occasion sentences are not observational (i.e., 'He's a bachelor') (Tersman, 765). However, Quine offers two distinct notions of observability; observation for a single speaker and observation for a group. But on the second sense of observability, Quine imposes a social condition (Tersman, 766). He (Quine) often points out that a sentence may be observational for a group that is smaller than a group of all competent speakers of the language to which it belongs, where membership in the wider group is conceived in terms of fluency of dialogue (Tersman, 766). This correlates with what Harman says that "the explanatory chain from principle to observation seems to be broken in morality" (Harman, 628). The consequence of Harman and Quine's positions is the distinctive manner in which moral beliefs are reduced to nothingness.

It is from the above (Quinean) framework that this study intends to take the charge against Harman's view about moral beliefs. If the social condition of observational sentence is satisfied by a given sentence with respect to a certain group, and on any occasion, it would command the same verdict from all members of the group. It is, however, a given fact that the moral group comprising those who understand moral language and its fluency cannot and must not be subjected to empirical observational group (Bergstrom and Follesdal, 1994: 193-194). A kind of problem would be created when moral observation is subjected to empirical observation. This is because what qualifies as observational sentence is just the readiness to assent outright on the strength of appropriate neural intake. The problem is that appropriate neural intake for a moral judgment will be the understanding created by the singular speaker or group of speakers about the moral statement made in support or to establish moral judgment, facts or situation. The implication is simple; it shows that moral facts or beliefs are established by the group of moral speakers and not the group of scientific speakers. Moreover, the moral inquiry itself is still objectively controlled from the moral universe.

D. Davidson agrees that there is a problem to be leveled against sentences that are observational (scientific or empirical). For him, consider, e.g., the sentence, 'That's red', a sentence that Harman, as well as Quine, classifies as typically observational (empirical). It seems clear that there is, for any individual, borderline cases that would neither prompt assent, nor dissent. Thus, it is clearly implausible to require that a sentence is observational, for all individuals are different but not opposing groups only if no simulations would leave any individual or group undecided (Davidson, 1994: 185). Davidson does not provide support for Harman's claim that moral beliefs are incapable of scientific beliefs because it is sufficient to conclude that moral beliefs are not similar to empirical confirmation.

Harman is rejecting moral beliefs because of naturalism, where functionalism is emphasized as that, which is interested in ascribing nothingness to moral beliefs. This, as this study will show, is entailed in the way Harman agrees to the fact that "we judge that something is good or bad, that it is right or wrong, that it ought or ought not to have certain characteristics or do certain things, relative to cluster of interests, roles and functions" (Harman, 632). Harman, in a way, agrees that when we want to relate this sort of analysis to ethics, a problem manifests. Quine's help to Harman, which supports empirical confirmation against moral beliefs cannot be ignored, but M. Murray's assertion that "all facts are facts of nature and not moral" (Murray, 2012: 291), aids the continuity of empirical observation than morality. This implies that there cannot, in any way, be a naturalistic reduction of moral facts. This is because they cannot help us explain observations in morality. Ethics, in this regard, remains problematic. Harman concedes that "since moral facts seem to be precisely neither reducible nor useful even in practice or in our explanations of observations; it remains problematic whether we have any reason to suppose that there are any moral facts" (Harman, 635). In support of this claim, Frank R. Ankersmit opines that 'the evidence for the truth of a sentence is identical with its meaning of the sentence' (Ankersmit, 2012: 23). What Ankersmit is saying is that, all inculcation of meanings must rest ultimately on sensory or empirical evidence. Thus, it is empirical confirmation or evidence which Harman, indirectly, wants moral beliefs to fulfil; but, this is impossible.

**Moral Beliefs and Empirical Confirmation: The Insufficiency of Harman's Claim:** The picture of science, according to Putnam, is that "science converges to a single true theory, a single

explanatory picture of the universe" (Putnam, 1989: 2). Corroborating Putnam, Quine asserts that "scientific statements meet the test of experience as a corporate body" (Quine, 1951: 20-21). As a consequence of Harman's claim, ethics suffers a dangerous fate because, as Quine would submit, "the idea that each scientific sentence has its own range of confirming observations and its own range of disconfirming observations, independent of what other sentences it is conjured to, is well known. If a sentence that does not in and of itself and by its very meaning have a method of verification, then it is meaningless. This implies that most of theoretical science (ethics inclusive) turns out to be meaningless" (Putnam, 1). This discourse is in support of Harman's claim and grounds for rejecting moral beliefs. Following the creation of the basis for judging statements in science, ethical sentences would become meaningless because they have no empirical method of verification. This study would consider this as insufficient. There is a moral universe where moral beliefs and terms are being used. This is why Laxminarayan Lenka posits that "in our vocabulary, we have ethical terms and concepts which are different from scientific terms" (Lenka, 2014: 3). However, as they (Harman, Putnam and Quine) considers, ethical sentences are unverifiable both in practice and in principle (Raatikainen, 2003: 18). This claim is not beyond challenge. Moral beliefs cannot be sufficiently reduced to nothingness.

This study would like to go with Tersman by agreeing to the fact that if we want to probe deeper into the dichotomy between science and ethics, we go elsewhere (This is a paraphrase of Tersman's (1987) opinion which this study agree with. The paraphrase does not take or remove the basis of Tersman's claim but attempts to further adjudicate or expatiate on the thesis of his work). Tersman feels, of course, that even if no sentence (moral) strictly satisfies the empirical condition for the entire linguistic (scientific) community, there might still be differences in degrees. There might be more agreement about some non-moral occasion sentences than about any moral universe (Tersman, 776). Degrees, in the sense as to which, each linguistic community has its own preferences and agreeable terms to be used and to express their beliefs. Upon this basis, science cannot reduce ethics to nothingness. Furthermore, in Tersman's terms, if no sentence (e.g., moral beliefs) is observational (Tersman, 776), thus, in either case, it implies that Harman's claim fail to show that we should be non-cognitivists about ethics and cognitivists about scientific discourse. However, Edward Becker's response made against Quine, his holism and Harman's incapacitation of moral beliefs, is that, there is a modification to the view which they (Quine and Harman) expressed, since conventionalism cannot be true because there has to be a universal modicum for which every notion, be it in science or moral philosophy can be explained and reviewed (Becker, 2012: 12).

This study reiterates that the disciplines that are not empirically observational should not be reduced to nothingness. What science is doing, according to this study, is that it is using empirical observation to force itself on all other disciplines so as to create a universal footpath to a monolithic form of observation. This study sees this as misleading. Disciplines should not become scientific or empirical in their nature at all cost because of the fear of been reduced to nothingness. Different responses can be given to the claims that have just been made by taking a look at the works of other philosophers of science who are moderate in their relevant discussions on moral beliefs.

Admiring Gibson, this study would like to admit that objectivity, correspondence theory and healthiness are attributed to scientific method of observation, while subjectivity, coherence theory and infirmity is said to be chiefly the method of justification in ethics (Gibson, 1988: 534-535). This could help in settling the radical difference and opposition between science and ethics. Gibson's claim could also help in settling Harman's claim against moral beliefs that they are incapable of being empirically confirmed. Arising from Harman's view, science and ethics are not on the same methodological par whatever we may want to use to address the difference. However, according to Flanagan, such attempt might consistently disparage ethics as "methodologically infirm" in comparison to natural science, and such disparity and reduction to nothingness is unjustified (Gibson, 536). In an attempt to rescue moral beliefs from Harman's incapability thesis, Flanagan introduces the theory of practice. He (Flanagan) argues that the same role that observation plays in making natural science to be seen as manifesting correspondence theory of truth, is what 'practice' can play on the part of moral beliefs (Gibson, 538-539). As this study would admit, Gibson's view suggests that we can objectively test the correctness of a theory of the good life by how much it works, that is, how much such theory maximizes our desired end (Gibson, 539). This may not necessarily make moral beliefs to be on the same empirical observational level with science, but it will afford moral beliefs

the opportunity not to be reduced to nothingness. As this study would assert, this is a derivative of the view that if science cannot, in a way, be reduced to nothingness because it cannot be essentially reduced to moral terms, then, moral beliefs are objectively true.

This study's take on the battle between ethics and science is a derivative of Flanagan's statement that, *sentences are brought to experience as a system which is ultimately constrained only by consistency consideration, our tendency towards epistemic conservatism, and the needs of practice* (Flanagan, 1982: 57). The inclusion of the underlined term "only by", according Oyedola and Oyedola, "is part of the reason that can be said made Flanagan to conclude that Quine and Harman's holism (the view that moral beliefs cannot be empirically verified or confirmed characteristic of scientific observation) precludes any form of correspondence truth (Oyedola and Oyedola, 2012: 26). Thus, they (Oyedola and Oyedola) submit that "if truly all our knowledge is "man made" (human judgment dependent), then Harman (albeit, Quine) does not have any justification but rather to be consistent to claim that moral beliefs or ethical method is incapable or infirm in comparison with natural science merely on the reason that its (moral beliefs) method of justification is subjective (man-made), while that of science is objective (independent of human judgment), except Harman (with Quine) is claiming now that natural science is not a body of knowledge" (Oyedola and Oyedola, 29).

**Conclusion:** For as much as this study is not bound to admire Harman's thesis that moral beliefs are incapable of empirical confirmation which have a link to Quine's holism, this study has not claimed to represent an attempt to seek absolute objectivity for moral beliefs. Rather, it attempts to explore the view that if ethics has its terms, adherents and universe upon which the pragmatic moral good, moral bad, right or wrong can be precipitated, then, moral beliefs are real, and they do not have to, in the strict sense, be empirically confirmed. As White (1982: 2) submits, the permissibility of recantation in discourse of morality is greatly significant to philosophy. Since moral beliefs are significant to philosophy, their reduction to nothingness because they are incapable of the sort of empirical confirmation characteristic of scientific beliefs is insufficiently asserted or misleading. Harman and Lepore's response to this problem is that, if we use Quine's holism, it is the case that moral evaluation cannot be carried out through empirical observational means (Harman and Lepore, 2014: 31).

Harman's failure, therefore, is a derivative of his acceptance of the incapability of moral beliefs of the sort of empirical confirmation characteristic of scientific belief. His claim can be said to flout the need for the recognition of coherence theory of truth and moral justification using pragmatic means to uphold the independent existence of moral beliefs. As Oyedola and Oyedola admit, "the fundamentally different goals of the two disciplines (ethics -- moral beliefs and science -- empirical observation) necessitate the difference in their methods of enquiry. So, any comparison (or rejection of one for the other) between them (ethics and science) in terms of method or incapability would be mistaken" (Oyedola and Oyedola, 37). Harman's position is a denigration of moral beliefs merely because they cannot be confirmed or disconfirmed by empirical verification; a claim that is inconsistent with the point made in both Harman's work and that of his predecessor and mentor—Quine.

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