

W.V.O. QUINE ON ETHICS AND CORRESPONDENCE THEORY OF TRUTH: AN APPRAISAL

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Abstract

The paper identified and explicated Quine's argument for the methodological infirmity of ethics. It examined the various arguments that have been raised in response to the Quinean argument on ethics. It also examined arguments in support of the peculiarity of ethics as a field of enquiry. This was with a view to determining the peculiarity of ethics as compared with science. This study was based on critical analysis of primary and secondary sources on Quine's methodological infirmity of Ethics. The results of the analysis show that Quine is right with his allegation of the methodological infirmity of ethics given his holism theory. The study discovers that the arguments of scholars against Quine's claim on the correspondent lot of ethics were misconceptions of Quine's methodological infirmity of ethics: because ethics as a field of enquiry is peculiarly different from science. The conclusion of the study is that despite the correctness of the Quinean claim about the infirmity of the methodology of ethics, ethics is peculiarly different from pure science as a field of human inquiry. Hence, it concludes that this peculiarity would not make the methodology of ethics infirm before the tribunal of science.

Keywords: Ethics, Truth, Correspondence

Introduction

In view of the arguments of scholars on Quine's claim that ethical discourse is methodological infirm, this paper intends to examine whether or not Quine's argument may still be sustained. The paper shall assess the plausibility of some main arguments which manifest prominently in the debate between Quine and his opponents on the charge of methodological infirmity against ethics. Such argument to examine shall include; the correspondence argument, pseudo problem of comparison, and then methodological infirmity versus meaningfulness of ethical proposition. Issues to be raised about those arguments shall include; whether or not correspondence theory can be the lot of ethical discourse. Besides, it shall also be raised if the charge of methodological infirmity implies 'meaningfulness infirmity' against ethics. The paper shall attempt to prove that comparing ethical discourse with pure scientific discourse and therefore declaring ethics infirm only ends up raising a pseudo problem.

Is Correspondence Theory the Lot of Ethics?

Quine argues that for a proposition to be meaningful such proposition must have a means of confirming or infirming it in experience.¹ Following from this, any statement lacking in this criterion is infirm. This means that for a statement to be

meaningful there must be a natural fact to which the statement corresponds in the natural world. Quine further argues that because scientific propositions enjoy this correspondence with the natural facts, correspondence theory of truth is the lot of science.ⁱⁱ But for him, any human enquiry, proposition or statement which does not enjoy this relationship of correspondence is therefore infirm. Being infirm in Quine's sense is that it is not significant. Ethical discourse belongs to enquiries that do not enjoy that relationship. This is the ground upon which ethical discourse is declared infirm. In response to Quine, Flanagan,ⁱⁱⁱ White^{iv} and Fasiku^v have attempted to show that, contrary to Quine's charge, it can be proved that ethical discourse also enjoys correspondence relationship. In their different means, they have provided argument to identify the entity that stands as the fact of the matter or its equivalence for ethical statement.

Flanagan on the Correspondence Lot of Ethics

For Flanagan, ethics also enjoys the correspondence theory of truth because 'practice' in ethics plays the corresponding role to observation in science.^{vi} Hence, for Flanagan, the empirical foothold of a moral code is not in the "observable moral act" as Quine claimed but rather in the "consequences of the observable moral act".^{vii} In view of this, Flanagan attempts to show that at least some scientific criteria such as correspondent, testability, predictability, etc., in science can be applied to reflections in ethics. Thus, ethics is not methodologically infirm. From this, it is clear that Flanagan holds the position the ethical discourse is also entitled to correspondence theory of truth. While Flanagan argue that the empirical foothold of a moral code is not "in the observable moral act" which Quine argue is in the consequences of the observable moral act, the consequences for Flanagan break the hold of the system, and undercut the thesis that we can judge our values "only by our moral standards themselves".^{viii} Flanagan argues that the actual performance of an action in which a particular moral conception occur break the hold of the system. On the basis of the arguments discussed above, Flanagan holds that ethics is not methodologically infirm as compared with science, and that it is also entitled to a correspondence theory of truth if science is. By this, it further boils down to the fact that statements (the ethical rule or principle) confront experience individually and the problem of the two dogmas which Quine had earlier rejected resurface again. In Flanagan's argument therefore, the individual testing of statements by practice reappear and as a result, Quine's argument of the methodological infirmity of ethics persists.

What is being argued is that while natural fact or the independent course of nature determines the truth function of descriptive proposition, in the case of ethics, *practice* or the *consequences* arising there from stand as the fact of the matter for ethical statements. He argues that the truth or falsity of ethical proposition could be determined by testing them against these practices or consequences from it. This means that ethical discourse also enjoys a correspondence relationship with practice or the consequences of the practice. For Flanagan, upon the strength of this argument, ethical discourse is not methodologically infirm. This is because the

basis upon which Quine bases the charge can be shown to be possible in ethical discourse.

However, a problem which can be identified with Flanagan's argument against Quine's claim for the methodological infirmity of ethics on correspondence theory of truth is that, "Practice" or "practical consequences" which Flanagan holds as the empirical foothold of ethics is determined by the ethical theory and not the other way round. For instance, the practice of respecting the elderly ones is determined by the ethical rule or norm "one ought to always respect elders". It is not the other way round. Practice usually follows the ethical rule or principle and is justified by the ethical rule or principle in case of ethics. But obviously, this is not the case in scientific discourse. The implication of this is that even if "practice" or the practical consequences correspond to ethical theory or ethical principle, "there must remain some ultimate ends unreduced and so unjustified", according to Quine's claim. Therefore, Flanagan has not appropriately responded to Quine's argument.

Morton White on the Correspondence Lot of Ethics

Morton White also attempts to establish that it can be proved that correspondence theory is the lot of ethical discourse. For him, if the empirical foothold of scientific theory is in the predicted observable event, then that of ethics is in the observable act which corresponds to descriptive science by appealing to what is observed and what is felt.^{ix} This position is based upon a plausible relationship between scientific statements and ethical propositions. This is because White argues that ethical propositions can co-habit in the same system with descriptive statement without the risk of unintelligibility or any significant harm to the system. For white, the kind of system that such relationship will yield is a pragmatic system. The strength of this argument is that pragmatic system relies heavily on correspondence theory for its justification.

For instance, the statement, "you are now discharged and acquitted" uttered by a judge in a court of law to an accused person, is pragmatic. This is because, the statement is expected to perform some functions. If the accused was brought to the court of law hand-cuffed, immediately after the utterance, the accused must be set free by the removal of the handcuff. But the point being made is that for pragmatic statement such as this to be meaningful, its significance rests heavily on the correspondence between the statement and the empirical fact. For example, the judge's statement definitely has a referent. For the statement to be meaningful there must be a correspondence between this statement and the referent, which is an entity in the natural world.

Suppose there is no referent of this statement, the statement is meaningless. This is because there is no other means of determining the significance of the statement except through correspondence, even though the statement is pragmatic. Now, it has been argued that the model generated by the co-existence of descriptive and normative statements, for White, is a pragmatic model. Besides, it has been shown that pragmatic model rests heavily and is justified within correspondence theory. Then, it follows that ethical propositions also enjoy this correspondence lot, even if

not directly, but indirectly. If ethical systems can co habit in the system without any disruption in the system or loss of meaning, it then becomes evident that ethics is not methodologically infirm. On this ground ethics is not methodologically infirm as Quine has alleged.

Furthermore, Morton White also falls into similar problem on the issue of the correspondence theory. Quine rejected the dogmas and developed his holism. In Quine's holism all statements have equal status. These statements are interconnected and they all confront experience as a whole. Every term in any statement has its meaning contingent on a vast network of knowledge and belief of the speaker's conception of the entire world.^x For this, in case of any single recalcitrant experience, the theory has to be adjusted to keep its edge square with experience.^{xi} By this, any statement that cannot be tested against the independent course of observable nature is not a candidate for Quine's web. However, White argues that our system of beliefs ought to be tested by referring to their capacity to link sensory experience with feelings.^{xii} By this it means that ethical statements and observational statements can co-exist in White's system. The question now is, if by Quine's holism, all statements face experience as a whole, where will ethical statements be in the system when the whole of observational statements face experience? Or, using White's word, what will 'feeling' or 'what is felt' correspond to? First, it indicates that White is recurring back to individual testing of statements within the web, but Quine had rejected any such individual testing of statements. Second, to justify White's correspondence, can we then say that "what is felt" is synonymous with what is observed?

Fasiku on the Correspondence Lot of Ethics

To show that ethics is not methodologically infirm because of the lack of correspondence relationship, Fasiku employs the concept "fact" as that which exists in all possible worlds. For him, moral facts exist in 'possible worlds' and it is these moral facts which exist in the 'possible world' that moral statement correspond to in order to confirm their truth or falsity.^{xiii} It should be noted that Fasiku employs logical sense to support his notion of possible worlds. His notion of the possible world "refers to the ways we imagine that the world could have been different from the way it is".^{xiv} For Fasiku, a thing is a fact if it exists in a possible world. If a possible world is a way we imagine that the world could have been different from the way it is, then, a fact which exists in a possible world would be an imagined way of how a thing could have been.

A fact, according to Merriam Webster's dictionary is "the quality of being actual" or "something that has actual existence". What is clear in this analysis is that the concept "fact" is construed differently. But the potent question which may hunt this analysis is; what then is a fact? One clear point is that whichever way the concept "fact" might be construed, it is naturally improbable that a product of imagination will be qualified as "fact". If indeed the way a thing could have been is a fact, then such concept, in the way it is used, cannot constitute a plausible substitute for a natural or actual fact. From this analysis, it may be clear why Fasiku's response to

Quine's charge of methodological infirmity is insufficient. This insufficiency of his response is based among other things on his construal of "fact". His construal of 'fact' is completely at significant variance with Quine's use of the term.

It may be asked how Fasiku should have conceived the term "fact" in order to be correctly positioned to respond to Quine's argument. As a naturalist, it would have been counter-productive for Fasiku to have conceived fact as something which is determined by imagination. First, imagination does not correspond to any natural fact to which its significance could be determined. This means that imagination may also be argued to be methodologically infirm. Second, Quine's argument does not in any way imply that fact is something which exists over and above the natural world. For Fasiku to be able to have a point against Quine as a naturalist, he must hold fact as objective entities in the natural world or what is being referred to as independent course of nature through which the significance (truth function) of a proposition could be tested.

For Fasiku moral fact is not an actual fact but a product of imagination. As such, the issue of correspondence between a proposition and an imaginary fact may fall short of Quine's requirement. Except Fasiku will provide argument that he is a "naturalist of a kind", then it can be argued that he also falls victim of reductionism of a kind. This may include testing of individual moral statement against individual moral fact in the possible world. But whichever way this is thought of, it may not escape Quine's second dogma. This is because, his moral fact in the possible world will then be a replica of facts in the actual world or something entirely different from it, the form in which Fasiku will have to explain.

Does Correspondence Really Benefit Ethics?

From the above, it is obvious that these critics, who were naturalist, attempt to oppose Quine, who is also a naturalist on his claim that ethical discourse does not correspond to any observable independent course of nature. However, from the above arguments, which can be said to be a naturalistic attempt, it can be said that their arguments against Quine failed. Their arguments failed because, first, they attempted a critic of Quine based on the platform which Quine himself had earlier rejected. What I mean by this is that, given Quine's antecedents, Quine had rejected the two dogmas of empiricism (the analytic-synthetic distinction and reductionism)^{xv} and he proposed his holistic model. In Quine's holistic model, statements in the model confront experience as a whole and not individually, therefore, it is not opened to any other naturalist to attack Quine based on individual examination of statements. Secondly, their arguments also failed because all that these critics attempted to use as that which ethical discourse corresponds to, fail to meet up with Quine's holistic requirements.

On the Pseudo Problem of Comparison

Although Quine argues that ethics is methodologically infirm as compared with scientific discourse on the ground that there are observable entities in the world that scientific theories and predictions correspond to but there are no such observable

entity that ethical discourse corresponds to in the world, the problem becomes pseudo on the ground that most of the commentators on the problem Quine raised do not fault the methodological infirmity of ethics, that is, if ethics really is. By pseudo-problem, it can mean either that the problem is not genuine because it has no possible solution or that the problem is not genuine because there is confusion in the elements of which it is composed. The pseudo-problem affects the case at hand not basically in the sense that there is no possible solution to the problem raised by Quine, but in the sense that there exists confusion in the elements of which Quine composed the problem. The confusing element identified here is in the *comparison* of ethics with science. Quine holds:

Moral contrasts are not, of course, so far to seek.
Disagreements on moral matters can arise at home,
and even within oneself. When they do, one regrets
the methodological infirmity if ethics as *compared*
with science.^{xvi}

From the above, Quine's arguments is not that ethics is methodologically infirm when and if it is subjected to the tribunal of ethical discourse but that it is methodologically infirm when subject to the scientific tribunal. My grounds for Quine's case here being a pseudo problem now is in the basis for the comparison. Why should/must we compare two fundamentally different fields of human enquiry (a social and natural inquiry)? It appears as if there is problem with ethics based on the idea that it was compared with pure science, once the comparison between the two fields is removed, then the problem which initially appears as real dissolves. This is the reason why the entire problem becomes pseudo, for each field should be studied independently of the other. It should be acknowledged that every discipline has its own methodology which differs from one another. In claiming that ethics is methodologically infirm as compared with science, Quine failed to acknowledge the fact that ethics is a social inquiry as well as a science of human action and not a pure science.^{xvii} To start with, even if we consider the rudiment and start with the examination of some of the concepts involved in both science and ethics for instance, it will be discovered that the concepts involved in ethics differ from those in the pure sciences.

To compare two disciplines for instance is to measure the two disciplines based on one common denominator. The basis for comparison allows one to look for the similarity and differences between the two disciplines so as to reflect the relative significance of each of the discipline on the basis for comparison. However, there exist no common denominator for pure scientific and ethical discourse and therefore no basis for comparison for ethics and science. It is the *comparison* which Quine placed on ethics that accord infirmity to ethical discourse, if no comparison is done therefore, ethics will retain its methodological firmness. Most of the critics of Quine followed Quine's misconception on the methodological infirmity thesis and continued to build on it with the attempt to find a solution to the problem Quine had raised by comparing two distinct disciplines. This in fact to me is another reason why they have not and will not be able to find any appropriate solution to

the problem Quine raised. The problem Quine raised by comparing ethics with science in their methods would not have been raised if ethics had been put in its proper perspective and not compared. A similar argument was raised by Moody-Adams^{xviii} only that her arguments about moral intuition as a means by which ethical theorist can access the relevant aspect of their self-conception leaves out a gap.

On this ground it becomes clear that this research does not say that moral discourses are meaningless. It only says that moral discourses are not amenable to pure scientific methodology when it is *compared*. In other words, they are and will remain methodologically deficient before scientific methodology and they are bound to be so deficient. This deficiency is owing to their peculiarity, the peculiarity that must be respected.

Methodological Infirmity and Meaningfulness of Ethical Propositions

Another major argument is about the meaningfulness of ethical discourse in view of Quine's charge of the methodological infirmity of ethics. In Quine's holism, a statement is significant so far as it has a relationship of correspondence to the independent course of observation. Otherwise it is not cognitively significant. But, the question that readily comes to mind is that, in view of Quine's thesis and given that ethical statements are not subject to empirical observation, are ethical statements or discourse meaningless. For instance, when we make ethical statement "one ought to always tell the truth", the statement conforms to our ordinary language and ways of speaking. Is it the case that the statement does not mean anything since truth function cannot be empirically determined. Or is methodological infirmity synonymous to meaning infirmity?

To further buttress my point, in deciding what to do on a particular occasion, we usually say such things as this, "I *know* that I should not break my promise, but I really would like to do something else today." We ordinarily do speak of moral judgments as right or wrong and we talk as if we knew certain moral truths but not others. But then, we must ask whether we can accommodate the point about ethical discourse without having to give up our ordinary views and ways of talking and endorsing some form of nihilism. Ordinarily, arguments against the critics of Quine might want to suggest to readers that this paper advocates for a kind of moral nihilism as a rejoinder to Quine's methodological infirmity claim, but, it is not the case. Moral nihilism is the doctrine that there are no moral facts, no moral truths, and no moral knowledge. This doctrine can account for why reference to moral facts does not seem to help explain observations, on the grounds that what does not exist cannot explain anything and neither can it be observed. An extreme version of nihilism holds that morality is simply an illusion: nothing is ever right or wrong, just or unjust, good or bad. In this extreme version, we should abandon morality, just as an atheist abandons religion after he has decided that religious facts cannot help explain observations. Some extreme nihilists have even suggested that morality is merely a superstitious remnant of religion but such extreme nihilism is hard to accept. This is because it implies that there are no moral constraints but that

everything is permitted and this is not an easy conclusion to accept. This, of course, does not refute extreme nihilism.

Nihilism does not purport to reflect our ordinary views; and the fact that it is difficult to believe does not mean that it must be false. This can be likened to the belief at one time in the history of the world when people had difficulty in believing that the earth was round; nevertheless the earth was round. In the same vein, a truly religious person could not easily come to believe that God does not exist but in actual fact, that is not a sufficient argument against atheism. Extreme nihilism is a possible view and it deserves to be taken seriously. On the other hand however, it is also worth pointing out that extreme nihilism is not an automatic consequence of the point that moral facts apparently cannot help explain observations. Although this is grounds for nihilism, there are more moderate versions of nihilism. Not all versions imply that morality is a delusion and that moral judgments are to be abandoned the way an atheist abandons religious judgments. Thus, a more moderate nihilism holds that the purpose of moral judgments is not to describe the world but to express our moral feelings or to serve as imperatives we address to ourselves and to others. In this view, morality is not undermined by its apparent failure to explain observations, because to expect moral judgments to be of help in explaining observations is to be confused about the function of morality. It is as if you were to expect to explain observations by exclaiming, "Alas!" or by commanding, "Close the door!" Moderate nihilism is easier to accept than extreme nihilism. It allows us to keep morality and continue to make moral judgments. It does not imply that there is nothing wrong with murdering ones father for example. Because we disapprove of this activity for instance, we can, according to moderate nihilism, legitimately express our disapproval by saying that they are wrong.

Moderate nihilism, nevertheless, still conflicts with common sense, even if the conflict is less obvious than extreme nihilism. To assert, as even moderate nihilists assert, that there are no moral facts, no moral truths, and no moral knowledge is to assert something that runs counter to much of what we ordinarily think and say. Nihilism, then, extreme or moderate, is in conflict with ordinary ways of talking and thinking.^{xix} Although such a conflict does not refute a theory, we must ask whether we can accommodate the point about ethics and observation without having to give up our ordinary views and ways of talking and endorsing some form of nihilism. The arguments here is specifically to say that even if normative ethics is not answerable to experience like we have in the sciences, it does not imply that it is meaningless, it still conform to our ordinary and normal ways of speaking. This can further be buttressed by the various activities of our judges in the law court. Furthermore, on the ground that the problem Quine raised with ethical discourse is pseudo, it becomes clear that moral discourses are not meaningless, only that they (moral discourses) are not amenable to pure scientific methodology when they are *compared*. In other words, they are methodologically deficient before pure scientific methodology. However, this deficiency on the part of ethical discourse is as a result of their peculiarity as different from scientific discourse. For the purpose of argument, it should be of note that if pure science is also to be subject to the methodology of ethics, it will also be termed infirm. I think Quine would not want

to admit that scientific or natural discourses are in anyway infirm given his holism. However, like I said earlier, there is no basis for comparison.

Ethics, Science and Observation

Another important point which needs discussion in view of Quine's claim for the methodological infirmity of ethics is the relationship between ethics and observation. It is of importance to this thesis because Quine places a large emphasis on it in his comparison. I quite agree with Quine that, observation plays a role in science that it does not seem to play in ethics. The difference is that you need to make assumptions about certain physical facts to explain the occurrence of the observations that support a scientific theory, but you do not seem to need to make assumptions about any moral facts to explain the occurrence of the so-called moral observations. In the moral case, it would seem that you need only make assumptions about the psychology or moral sensibility of the person making the moral observation. In the scientific case, theory is tested against the world. When scientists make observations, the observations support the theory only because, in order to explain their making the observations, it is reasonable to assume something about the world over and above the assumptions made about the observer's psychology unlike we have in the moral case.

The implication of this is that, the scientists in such a situation when his observation confirms his theory and as such rests on inferring an explanation from such observation would count his making the observation as confirming evidence for his theory only to the extent that it is reasonable to explain his making the observation by assuming that, not only is he in a certain psychological state given the theory he accepts and his beliefs about the experimental apparatus, but furthermore, that there was really something in the world out there which he observed (confirmational evidence). But, if his having made that observation could have been equally well explained by his psychological state alone, without the need for any assumption about anything out there in the world, then the observation would not have been evidence for the existence of that which he had observed and therefore would not have been evidence for his theory. The observation of an event can provide observational evidence for or against a scientific theory in the sense that the truth of that observation can be relevant to a reasonable explanation of why that observation was made. 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. The fact that the observation of an event was made at the time it was made is evidence not only about the observer but also about the physical facts. The fact that you made a particular moral observation when you did does not seem to be evidence about moral facts, only evidence about you and your moral sensibility. But there does not seem to be any way in which the actual rightness or wrongness of a given situation can have any effect on your perceptual apparatus. In this respect, ethics seems to differ from science.^{xx}

Although for the purpose of argument, it can be argued that not that every legitimate scientific hypothesis is susceptible to direct observational testing, certain hypothesis about "black holes" in space cannot be directly tested, for example, because no signal is emitted from within a black hole yet the connection with observation in such a case is indirect. And there are many similar examples. Nevertheless, seen in the large, there is the apparent difference between science and ethics as I have noted in my explanations above. The scientific realm is accessible to observation in a way the moral realm is not.

Normative Ethical Discourse in View of Neuro-Ethics

Methodology aside, there is, however, one type of impact that most philosophers should be able to agree on, as noted by Peter Singer: advances in embryology and medicine have already opened up new areas of normative discussion and will in all likelihood continue to do so. This will prompt this research to examine the advances in neuro-ethics *vis a vis* Quine's claim on the methodological infirmity of ethics. Neuro-ethics refers to two related fields of study: the ethics of neuro-science and the neuro-science of ethics.^{xxi} The ethics of neuro-science concerns the ethical, legal and social impact of neuro-science including the ways in which neuro-technology can be used to predict or alter human behaviour and the implications of our mechanistic understanding of brain function for society; integrating neuro-scientific knowledge with ethical and social thought. Neuro-ethics encompasses the myriads of ways in which developments in basic and clinical neuro-science intersect with social and ethical issues. Some of the range of issues involved in neuro-ethics has close ties to traditional biomedical ethics.^{xxii} For example, the issue of brain imaging on the correlations between brain activity and intentional deception such as in the context of a lie detector and also in the exploration the brain activity of patients in coma, vegetative or minimally conscious state.^{xxiii}

Now, some of the core issues in neuro-ethics with major influence on the subject of the methodological infirmity of ethics is that if machines such as discovered by neuro-scientists could read one's mind given the existing brain imaging methods and subsequently be able to study emotions, perceptions, language, etc, what then would scientific method not be able to handle in ethical matters? Or, of what relevance would the normative side of ethics be? Neuro-scientists are of the view that machines such as the polygraph can detect lies, while the brain fingerprinting machine is claimed to be able to reveal a person's knowledge of events through electrodes attached to the scalp for instance. With these, they are of the point that they are capable with their own methods to answer ethical questions which are related to such issues and as such can hold that the methods of ethics is infirm as compared to neuro-science.

In view of the above, I think that if we can programme a computer or any electronic device to understand feelings as well as concepts of fairness/reciprocity and harm/care as well as input all the relevant information regarding an ethical dilemma, really, it may be possible "in theory" for it to derive the correct ethical answer but where the problem lies is in the fact that ethics is beyond the mere

theoretical applicability. The practicality or “what it is like to be human and not a machine” involved will still be left out; hence, ethics still remain peculiarly different from science. Quine does not also have problem with the descriptive part of ethics but with the normative part of ethics. On this note, Quine’s claim of the methodological infirmity of ethics as compared with science is still retained. Also, normative ethics as well remains peculiar to pure science.

In view of the various analysis and arguments given so far, Quine’s claim that ethics is methodologically infirm as compared with the pure science given that it is not answerable to experience and observation is tenable. Although the line of argument in this paper has not been to examine the methods of science versus that of ethics, but, I think, for Quine to argue that a method or some methods are infirm, there is the need for Quine at one point or the other to be able to specifically mention or outline the so-called infirm methods but this I did not see anywhere in any of his writings. Will it not result into an absurdity for Quine to argue that the method of philosophy are infirm in that they are not subject to experience as we have in the sciences?

Conclusion

In this paper, some main arguments in the debate on the methodological infirmity of ethics between Quine and his opponents are identified. Such argument examined include; the correspondence argument, pseudo problem of comparison, and then methodological infirmity versus meaningfulness of ethical proposition. For instance, issues such as whether or not correspondence theory can be the lot of ethical discourse was sufficiently raised and discussed. It was found out that most of the main arguments of Quine’s opponents on this issue fail to subdue Quine’s charge of methodological infirmity against ethics. This is because attempts made to provide a substitute for empirical fact or equivalence to the independent course of nature does not make any plausible sense. Besides, it was raised whether methodological infirmity implies meaning infirmity against ethics. However, it was argued that methodological infirmity of ethics does not imply meaning infirmity of ethics. The paper also proves that comparing ethical discourse with pure scientific discourse and therefore declaring ethics infirm only ends up raising a pseudo problem.

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^{xiii}FasikuGbenga, “Moral Facts, Possible Moral Worlds and Naturalized Ethics”, p 265

^{xiv}FasikuGbenga, “Moral Facts, Possible Moral Worlds and Naturalized Ethics”, p 267

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