

THE WAY AHEAD

Esalen Survival Seminar Monday Morning Session, May 21, 2007

Adam Crabtree

Here are some thoughts about how I presently see our seminar and its directions in the immediate future.

We are a group of people from a great diversity of background who are engaged in a study initially centered on survival which has extended into broader fields of psychology and philosophy. I see us as individuals with deep interests in these matters, interests that emerge from both professional and personal experiences.

In our discussions there has been a constant interweaving of empirical and theoretical perspectives. How could it be otherwise? Everything we know is based on experience, but we are constantly striving to unify or contextualize or just plain make sense out of that experience. We formulate and reformulate theories in the hope of accomplishing that task. We have recently somewhat shifted the emphasis of our talks toward the theoretical, but that shift is significantly tempered by the fact that if we are going to be effective in our theory-building, we must constantly relate our speculations to experience.

In *Irreducible Mind* we have produced a powerful document which examines the range of psychological and psycho-physical phenomena from the ordinary to the extraordinary, highlighting the neglect of the latter and the need to begin a new era of serious study of the fullness of concrete human experience. *Irreducible Mind* fittingly concluded with a call for a general theory that would embrace *all* the “stubborn facts” of human reality. The answer to that call is our projected second book, at this point simply referred to as our “theory-building book.”

As I see it, our theory-building book needs to work toward the development of a general theory of human being and experience that is inclusive of all the data and consistent with solidly established but less general theories (such as quantum mechanics). This will best be done by taking into account ideas provided by previous researchers and theoreticians. If we are to be successful in our theory building, especially if we are to arrive at an agreed-upon general theory, it will be because we have built on the shoulders of those who have gone before.

But to do this we must first confront a fundamental problem that has plagued discussions of the type of phenomena referred to in *Irreducible Mind* over the past 150 years. That problem is a

singular lack of reflection on the human element in theory building, those personal and cultural factors that inevitably influence the outcome of any theory-building process.

When I read the literature of psychology as it relates to the data we are concerned with and the theory building based on them, I find a notable lack of awareness of these issues. Although some philosophers recognize the problems, among researchers and theory builders there is little acknowledgment of the deep influence on theory exerted by the particular interests and intentions of the theory builder. Rather, the assumption most often seems to be that one can formulate a theory from some objective, presupposition-free point of view. Whereas the truth is that theories are formed from a particular standpoint, as William James says, “all seeing is *seeing as*.”

Both James and John Searle insist that all experience is perspectival. Every experience (and every theory) embodies one perspective from among the myriad that are available. This perspectival character of experience is not merely incidental to the theory-building process, with a negligible effect on the theory produced. On the contrary its effect is central—a fact that might rightly instill some caution in theory-builders as they pursue their task.

Many people experience a great deal of frustration when they encounter rejection of the types of experiences described in *Irreducible Mind*. They find themselves in a battle of subcultures in which accusations and counter-accusations cut deep. There seems to be little chance of dialogue between these divergent points of view because the issues are so wrapped in emotion. This fund of emotion barely below the surface of discourse reveals a crucial fact: theories themselves in their very foundations are derived from perspectives that are determined by very personal feelings, and the mere questioning of a theory tends to bring that emotion rushing to the surface.

Emotion-laden Theory

How can theory be so emotion-laden? The answer to this question should constitute the first order of business in our new book. We have to recognize that the central issue in the battle of subcultures is *not* a lack of “good enough” data to convince those who reject the facts referred to in *Irreducible Mind*. Credible data can be piled up, layer on layer, with little effect on such critics because of factors that go beyond data and beyond reason.

William James provides tools for dealing with this neglected area of investigation. He points out that it is not a simple matter to work with the mass of “stubborn facts” that show themselves to the empiricist. In a letter to his literary brother Henry, William said,

How you produce volume after volume the way you do is more than I can conceive, but you have n’t to forge every sentence in the teeth of irreducible and stubborn facts as I do. It is like walking through the densest brush wood. (James, 1993, p. 59)

In another letter to Henry, he writes,

But my time is altogether taken up by other things, and almost every page of this book of mine is against a resistance which you know nothing of in your resistless air of romance, the resistance of *facts*, to begin with, each one of which must be bribed to be on one's side, and the resistance of other philosophers to end with, each one of which must be slain. (p. 68)

When James says that he has to bribe facts and kill philosophers, he is acknowledging the problem every theory builder has to face: that we come at the project with a view point already established in our thinking and want the facts to be friendly to that view point, and that we seek to defeat thinking that opposes our own thinking in order to vindicate our perspective. He uses emotional words to describe his situation precisely because the theory-building process itself *is* emotion-laden. Throughout the rest of his career, James would continually come back to this problem and he contributed invaluable insights into the role of personal perspective in theory building.

In *The Will to Believe*, James writes:

Pretend what we may, the whole man within us is at work when we form our philosophical opinions. Intellect, will, taste, and passion co-operate just as they do in practical affairs; and lucky it is if the passion be not something as petty as a love of personal conquest over the philosopher across the way. (James 1899, p. 92)

In all this it is important to remember that James's views were too deeply rooted in experience for him to have a naive faith in theory. James insisted that science is necessarily limited, "a mere fragment of truth broke out from the whole mass of it for the sake of practical effectiveness exclusively" (James 1920a, p. 317). James would never let himself stray so far from the concrete as to become lost in theoretical flights. As Charlene Seigfried says, "It is just this refusal to transcend the contribution of individual sciences, personal experiences, artistic endeavors, and religious revelations that allowed James to unmask the will to domination hidden in conceptual science." (Seigfried 1990, p. 52)

If there is no way to avoid the emotional and the "will to domination" in theory making, is there at least some way to use our knowledge of that fact to guide us wisely through the process?

Interest

We want to communicate with people at large. We want them to really understand what we mean to say. We want them to grasp our ideas without distortion. But, given the emotion-laden nature of theoretical formulations, how do we bring this about?

Given the culture and times we live in, we should *expect* to encounter rigidity, even fear. If we want to understand the reason theory is emotion-laden, then, like James, we have to scrupulously

analyze the factors involved, such as:

- the process of abstraction from pure experience to perception to conception to theory
- the crucial role of “interest” in this process
- the influence of interest on selective attention
- the role of evolutionary predispositions, temperament, personal experience, language, and cultural categories on the formation of interest

And if we are to make a *full* analysis, we must include ourselves in the mix. We must recognize that our theory building is not exempt from these influences. Perhaps this will help us understand those who have views antagonistic to our own, since they are necessarily operating from a limited perspective, as are we all.

If we are to communicate with those who tremble in the face of the data we are discussing, we should start with a recognition of their uneasiness and show that we can take note of their concerns in a sympathetic way. I do not believe that a fruitful dialogue is possible without taking into account the fears of those we want to talk with. There is nothing like genuinely expressed sympathy to open the minds of the people we wish to reach. That is the first step in a dialogue. The opportunity to communicate about more difficult things can then follow.

In our dialogue we should not neglect to point out, however, that the latent emotions that are likely to be evoked in discussion are a sign of the inevitably subjective nature of theory building—a fact that needs to be always kept at the forefront of our thinking. We cannot expect that all who hear us will be brought over to our way of thinking. Intellectual/emotional habits of a lifetime do not easily give way. But if we use this approach, we can reasonably expect to have a fruitful exchange with people who are genuinely interested in the issues.

Although some contemporary philosophers pay serious attention to the necessary limitations imposed on theory makers, it is rare that psychological theorists do so. If we acknowledge that we ourselves are not free from these limitations, do we undermine our own theory-building credibility? My answer is: No, we do not—and for two reasons. First, by recognizing the reality that there is no privileged perspective on the facts and that all theories must be considered provisional, we put ourselves in a position of strength compared to those who ignore the problems involved. Second, we are realists, and to say that no theory escapes limitations is not to say that we cannot find out anything significant about the realities we study. We are constrained by what is given, and facts still remain implacably stubborn. In *Varieties of Religious Experience*, James discussed this very issue in talking about the various god-theories that have been developed over the ages. He pointed out that the notion of “God” evolved and altered radically as successive cultures brought different interests and practical needs to the speculative task:

Since it is impossible to deny secular alterations in our sentiments and needs, it would be absurd to affirm that one's own age of the world can be beyond correction by the next age.

Skepticism cannot, therefore, be ruled out by any set of thinkers as a possibility against which their conclusions are secure; and no empiricist ought to claim exemption from this universal liability. But to admit one's liability to correction is one thing, and to embark upon a sea of wanton doubt is another. Of willfully playing into the hands of skepticism we cannot be accused. He who acknowledges the imperfectness of his instrument, and makes allowance for it in discussing his observations, is in a much better position for gaining truth than if he claimed his instrument to be infallible....If we claim only reasonable probability, it will be as much as men who love the truth can ever at any given moment hope to have within their grasp. Pretty surely it will be more than we could have had, if we were unconscious of our liability to err. Nevertheless, dogmatism will doubtless continue to condemn us for this confession. The mere outward form of inalterable certainty is so precious to some minds that to renounce it explicitly is for them out of the question. They will claim it even where the facts most patently pronounce its folly. But the safe thing is surely to recognize that all the insights of creatures of a day like ourselves must be provisional. The wisest of critics is an altering being, subject to the better insight of the morrow, and right at any moment, only "up to date" and "on the whole." When larger ranges of truth open, it is surely best to be able to open ourselves to their reception, unfettered by our previous pretensions. (James 1903, pp. 332-333)

A balanced approach to the problem in my opinion involves these elements: 1) the acknowledgment that all experience is perspectival and subject to the limits that this implies, 2) that what is experienced is determined by our selective attention based on our interests as experiencers, 3) that these interests are determined by the factors mentioned above, 4) that through selective attention we begin a process which, while concentrating on some aspects, ignores others, 5) that this process is the basis for what William James calls abstraction, by which percepts are an abstraction from pure experience and concepts (and language) are an abstraction from percepts, and that in this process we progressively distance ourselves from the richness of concrete experience itself, and 6) that theories, since they are formed in the last stages of abstraction, are subject to severe limitations deriving from the fact that they embody the same perspectival and abstract character as do percepts and concepts. They are based on a limited spectrum of percepts, applicable only to what is attended to and not applicable to what is ignored. In this regard James wrote:

There is nothing improbable in the supposition that an analysis of the world may yield a number of formulae, all consistent with the facts. In physical science different formulae may explain the phenomena equally well,—the one-fluid and the two-fluid theories of electricity, for example. Why may it not be so with the world? Why may there not be different points of view for surveying it, within each of which all data harmonize, and which the observer may therefore either choose between, or simply cumulate one upon another? A Beethoven string quartet is truly, as some one has said, a scraping of horses' tails on cats' bowels, and may be exhaustively described in such terms; but the application of this description in no way precludes the simultaneous applicability of an entirely different description...If, then, there were several systems excogitated, equally

satisfying to our purely logical needs, they would still have to be passed in review and approved or rejected by our aesthetic and practical nature. (James 1899, p. 76)

I would like to re-emphasize that the real obstacle to open and fluid dialogue about data and theories in this field lies in the fact that very few theoreticians recognize the limitations I am discussing and, turning a blind eye to the actual state of affairs, claim for their theories a kind of privileged point of view and unique truth status. They apparently believe that their thinking has escaped the influence of evolution, culture, and personal experiences and attained a godlike, absolute perspective. Once that claim is made, all other theories will naturally be treated as false. And in the process of asserting the superiority of one's theory over others, it soon becomes revealed how emotion-laden the defended theory is.

There are many who go about this process in naive good faith, mistakenly believing that their theory can capture the nature of concrete reality in its full richness. This leads to all kinds of error, most notably extending a theory legitimately developed in one limited area or from some limited set of data to matters outside that territory. We can imagine such errors being made in ignorance, in good faith; nevertheless, the wrong-headed thinking of this approach to theory must be called on the carpet of philosophical criticism. For others the issue of truth becomes an issue of personal power and status, and they feel they must defend their view to ensure their own survival; here we catch a whiff of bad faith. Still others are so unaware of the limitations of the theory building process that they believe that, having arrived at ultimate truth about the nature of things, they are free to impose their views on the "ignorant" using whatever means are at hand. This is what might be described as a kind of *intellectual colonialism*, involving thinking that is so inflated that everyone else is seen to belong to the unwashed intellectual masses who need to be instructed about what to believe. Here there is bad faith, for the intellectual colonialist pretends to dialogue, but is only interested in imposing conformity. This bad faith is characterized by the compulsion to control and manipulate whole cultures on the basis of personal preferences.

Our job is to question all these positions, from the naive to the arrogant, by examining the real nature of the theory-building process that they, and we, are engaged in. The bottom line is that, as James and other philosophers since him insist, there is no privileged perspective that delivers the "real truth" of the nature of things. There are only limited perspectives that make limited contributions to our knowledge of reality. As I see it, discussing this should constitute the first part of the theory-building book.

Flow of Our Theory-building Book

Now I would like to say a few words about the general flow of our theory-building book. Here is its general outline as I see it at the moment:

OUTLINE

Introduction: A Data-friendly Theory of Human Experience
Part One: On Theory and Stubborn Fact
Part Two: The Data: Establishing the Range of Stubborn Facts
Part Three: Contributory Theories
Part Four: Theory-Building

The Introduction will tie this book in with *Irreducible Mind* and position it as its logical continuation. Part One will take up the issue of the nature of theory and personal and cultural influences on theory building (some elements of which are referred to in this paper). Part Two will lay out what kinds of well-established data (of the kind mentioned in *Irreducible Mind*) must be accounted for by any general theory. It will also take up the matter of the status of data deriving from traditions of practice (e.g., Aurobindo) and from anthropological accounts of culturally embedded afterlife experiences (e.g., among traditional religions). Part Three will examine past theories and philosophical visions that provide inspiration for a new general theory (e.g., James, Myers, Whitehead, Aurobindo, etc.) or that are well enough established in their own right to merit inclusion in such a theory (e.g., quantum mechanics). Part Four will present a newly minted general theory (or several of them) that attempts to take into account all the factors already discussed.

* * * * *

I would like to conclude with words from James's writings which sum up my general feelings about the relationship we hope to establish between the type of phenomena examined in *Irreducible Mind* and empirical science in general. He said that "man's religious interests [i.e., interests in what James will later call the rogue phenomena of "the More"] must be able to swallow and digest and grow fat upon all the facts and theories of modern science"(James 1920a, p. 284). Grow fat on the facts and theories of science, yes, because any truly inclusive theory must be ready to digest what is useful from every sphere of experience. But, asks James, will such a healthy digestion as that ever become a reality?

Can the synthesis and reconciliation [between science and faith] ever come? It would be as rash to despair of it as to swear to it in advance. But when it does come, whatever its specific character may be, it will necessarily have to be of the theoretic order, a result of deeper philosophic analysis and discrimination than has yet been made. He who makes it will indeed be a leader of his time. (James 1920a, pp. 140-141)

It is this kind of theoretic synthesis and reconciliation we are trying to achieve. I believe that with the foundations in the form of *Irreducible Mind* in place and our theory-building project underway, we are in a position to make real progress in that direction. Who knows, maybe we will even become leaders of our time.

THE FACT IS.... (Addendum to The Way Ahead)

What are these “facts” we keep talking about? The answer requires a bit of context.

According to Descartes, there is a world “out there,” and a mind “in here.” Somehow our minds are able to know and affect the world “out there,” but just how is not clear, since the mind is not part of the world “out there.”

Newtonian physics builds on this vision, and adds that what is out there, the physical world, is completely self-sufficient and has no need of or place for consciousness or mind: all can be explained in terms of matter and motion. Every action, every change can be exhaustively accounted for in those terms. Mind becomes the ghost in the machine.

James finally and definitively rejected the Cartesian view of things with his foundational analysis of experience (*Principles of Psychology*) and his metaphysics of pure experience (*Essays in Radical Empiricism*). Bohr, Heisenberg, von Neumann, and company finally and definitively rejected the Newtonian view of things, affirming that contemporary physics (quantum mechanics) is irreducibly psychophysical (Stapp, *Mindful Universe*, January 4, 2007, p. 75).

What this means, from both a Jamesian and quantum mechanical point of view, is that there are no such things as “facts” existing in their own right—“out there.” Facts are not discovered, like rocks lying in a field, they are constructed through input/feedback cycles. The only way that “facts” could be out there would be if we could experience an “objective” world that clanks along on its own, with no reference to consciousness. James and quantum mechanics, each in their own way, demolish this vision of reality, and in doing so demolish reductive materialism.

“Facts” or “data” are “what is given” (datum), but how are facts given? And how do they wind up in theories?

The Construction of Facts and Theories

James says that we should not believe that

the mere fact of mental confrontation with a certain series of facts will be sufficient to make *any* brain conceive their law. The conceiving of the law is a spontaneous [evolutionary] variation in the strictest sense of the term. It flashes out of one brain, and no other, because the instability of that brain is such as to tip and upset itself in just that particular direction. (James 1899, p. 249)

How could he make such a statement? Are not theories driven by facts, and if so, do not certain facts lead inevitably to certain theories? James does not seem to think so. In the *Principles of*

Psychology, he wrote: “The popular notion that ‘Science’ is forced on the mind *ab extra*, and that our interests have nothing to do with its constructions, is utterly absurd” (James 1890, II, p. 667). Much later he would state:

Up to about 1850 almost every one believed that sciences expressed truths that were exact copies of a definite code of non-human realities. But the enormously rapid multiplication of theories in these latter days has well-nigh upset the notion of any one of them being a more literally objective kind of thing than another...The notion that even the truest formula may be a human device and not a literal transcript has dawned upon us. (James 1909, p. 58)

Indeed, notions such as “matter,” “mass,” “atom,” “ether,” “inertia,” “force,” etc. are artifacts, not revelations (James 1911, p. 90n)

James insisted that a merely receptive attitude toward what we encounter leads to nothing:

The world may in fact be likened unto a lock, whose inward nature, moral or unmoral, will never reveal itself to our simply expectant gaze. The positivists, forbidding us to make any assumptions regarding it, condemn us to eternal ignorance, for the ‘evidence’ which they wait for can never come so long as we are passive. (James 1899, p. 108)

For James, facts are not things, they are something that is given in experience, constructed through experience. As he sees it, experience is fundamentally intentional; that means that experience is always experience of *something*, never experience with no object. And it also means that the “physical” or “objective” aspect of the world is never given on its own, but always in relationship to some consciousness that interacts with it. (This, by the way, is also the position of the phenomenologists). In this way he concludes that facts are given as a result of activity.

In quantum mechanics, the “facts” or “data” consist in the feedbacks that follow upon an input into a dynamic situation. In other words, facts are the Process 3 “answer of nature” to the question posed by the Process 1 input. These feedbacks are not objective things “out there” awaiting our discovery. As a matter of fact, quantum mechanics has no intention of saying anything about the nature of an “out there.” Bohr said, “in our description of nature the purpose is not to disclose the real essence of phenomena, but only to track down as far as possible relations between the multifold aspects of our experience” (quoted in Stapp, *Mindful Universe*, January 4, 2007, p. 11).

On the other hand, the observer does not create reality *ex nihilo*. As Henry Stapp says, “The observer does not create what is not potentially there, but does participate in the extraction from the mass of existing potentialities individual items that have interest and meaning to the perceiving self” (p. 8). This understanding of fact is in full harmony with James’s way of seeing things:

I am a natural realist. The world *per se* may be likened to a cast of beans on a table. By themselves they spell nothing. An onlooker may group them as he likes. He may simply count them all and map them. He may select groups and name these capriciously, or name them to suit certain extrinsic purposes of his. Whatever he does, so long as he *takes account* of them, his account is neither false nor irrelevant. If neither, why not call it true? It *fits* the beans-*minus*-him, and *expresses* the total fact, of beans-*plus*-him. Truth in this total sense is partially ambiguous, then. If he simply counts or maps, he obeys a subjective interest as much as if he traces figures. Let that stand for pure intellectual treatment of the beans, while grouping them variously stands for non-intellectual interests. All that Schiller and I contend for is that there is *no* truth without *some* interest, and that non-intellectual interests play a part as well as intellectual ones. Whereupon we are accused of denying the beans, or denying being in anyway constrained by them! It's too silly! (James 1920b, II, pp. 295-296)

The point is that there *is something to take account of*. That is what puts this approach in the category of realism. The thing that James relentlessly *adds* to realism is that *interest* is always and inescapably at work, and that anyone who thinks he can get around this, anyone who believes that he has a privileged “objective” view or a non-perspectival take on reality, is bound to fail. But this addition takes nothing away from the basically realistic foundations of James’s analysis.

It is not hard to see how some important post-modernist relativists, such as Richard Rorty, claim James as their father (see Rorty 1982, xiii-xlvi). It is but a short step from the above quotation to say that the beans are never really available to us—that we cannot actually take them into account, and so cannot actually say something fundamentally meaningful about them. But that is not what *James* says. He does say, however, that no bean counter or grouper has unique access to the beans and can thereby rule out of court the perspective of other sorters. In this he and Rorty agree. But unlike Rorty, James says that conversations among the various bean counters and groupers can lead us closer and closer to the truth of what the beans actually are, although he does not say that this convergence will ever be perfect or complete.

Inputs

In James the “facts” or “data” are the percepts that result when we query the world. Our experience always involves inputs in the sense that we are only able to experience the world when we have taken some action. What we put into it is our interest-driven attention. James calls this “selective interest,” since our attention always selects something to focus on, at the expense of other things that are ignored. Since the only way we can have meaningful experience is to direct our attention to some things and ignore others, even our simplest experiences of the most ordinary life situations involve a kind of probing activity on our part. We *must* apply this selective interest because otherwise we would be flooded by impressions that would overwhelm and paralyze us: “Only those items which I *notice* shape my mind - without selective interest, experience is an utter chaos. Interest alone gives accent and emphasis, light and shade,

background and foreground - intelligible perspective, in a word” (James 1890, I, p. 403)

Seigfried highlights this fundamental feature of James’s view of the human being active in the world: “Because nothing can be described before it has been pre-selected as an object of investigation, there can be no determination of fact without identifying the subjective interests operative” (Seigfried, p. 76). I believe this needs to be a watchword for our approach to theory building.

In James’s view, what we attend to and ignore at each moment of experience is influenced by many kinds of interest. The mental equipment that developed through the evolution of our race embodies one kind (it is not hard to make the case that there is survival value to be able to be able from birth to attend to certain patterns and ignore others). Another is found in the lessons we learn from our social and family environments about what to attend to and what to ignore (e.g., the Inuit can perceive and describe over 100 kinds of snow, whereas most of us notice only a few; in our interactions with others we learn to notice indications of what people expect of us and, because these have survival value, we constantly scan for them). Also, we develop selective interests through our own personal experience; through experience we come to learn what it is useful to notice within the great mass of information available to us and also what is just as useful to ignore. All these influences help to determine our interest—that which is at work to guide our attention, and it is our attention that is our input or action upon the world that is involved in the construction of facts.¹

¹Already in 1878 James had set himself on this track, and he would hold it to the end. In his “Remarks on Spenser’s definition of Mind as Correspondence,” he writes:

Consciousness itself is not merely intelligent in this sense. It is *intelligent intelligence*. It seems both to supply the means and the standard by which they are measured. It not only *serves* a final purpose, but *brings* a final purpose—posits, declares it. This purpose is not a mere hypothesis—“*if* survival is to occur, then brain must so perform,” etc.—but an imperative decree: “Survival *shall* occur, and therefore, brain *must* so perform!” It seems hopelessly impossible to formulate anything of this sort in non-mental terms, and this is why I must still contend that the phenomena of subjective “interest,” as soon as the animal consciously realizes the latter, appears upon the scene as an absolutely new factor, which we can only suppose to be latent thitherto in the physical environment by crediting the physical atoms, etc., each with a consciousness of its own, approving or condemning its motions....The survivors constitute the right way of thinking. While the issue is still undecided, we can only call them our prepossessions. But, decided or not, “go in” we each must for one set of interests or another. The question for each of us in the battle of life is, “can we *come out* with it?” Some of these interests admit to-day of little dispute. Survival, physical well-being, and undistorted cognition of what is, will hold their ground....I, for my part, cannot escape the consideration, forced upon me at every turn, that the knower is not simply a mirror floating with no foot-hold anywhere, and passively reflecting an order that he comes upon and finds simply existing. The knower is an actor, and co-efficient of the truth on one side, whilst on the other he registers the truth which

Conclusion

Our interests fundamentally determine the actual perceptions that form our experience. In James's terminology, all of our "percepts" are the result of a combination of attending and ignoring. In this sense our percepts are shot through with mental inputs. In the Jamesian schema, the "facts", the "data" are our *percepts*. In the quantum mechanical schema, they are the *feedbacks* that we observe. In both cases, the facts we get are fundamentally affected by the previous activity of consciousness. This is why the criticisms of James by certain philosophers who say that he over-emphasizes the personal when talking about percepts and the theories that build upon them both misunderstand what he was saying and underestimate the power of his actual position.

Because at every level what we experience is determined by the process of attending and ignoring, an activity that is inherently interest-driven, the personal, limited perspective of the individual cannot be ignored in the theory-building process. Whether we are talking about percepts (data) or theories, those factors that influence interest are inevitably at work. This does not mean that "anything is possible" or that there is no such thing as reality. Just as for the orthodox theory of quantum mechanics (as stated in the Stapp quote above) "the observers does not create what is not potentially there," so also for James (who always considered himself a realist) our potential experiences are constrained by some limiting factor, so that they tend to recur in a certain given way (James 1911, pp. 61 & 123). So although facts are a construction, they are not fabricated out of whole cloth. Facts require *both* reality *and* the participation of an experiencer. These are the facts we are dealing with as we work on an inclusive general theory.

he helps to create. Mental interests, hypotheses, postulates, so far as they are bases for human action—action which to a great extent transforms the world—help to *make* the truth which they declare. In other words, there belongs to mind, from its birth upward, a spontaneity, a vote. It is in the game, and not a mere looker-on. (James 1978, pp 20-21)

In 1879 he summed up the matter of interest and selective attention in "Are We Automata?" (James 1983, p. 460):

Whoever studies consciousness, from any point of view whatever, is ultimately brought up against the mystery of *interest* and *selective attention*. There are a great many things which consciousness *is* in a passive and receptive way by its cognitive and registrative powers. But there is one thing which it *does*, *sua sponte*, and which seems an original peculiarity of its own; and that is, always to choose out of the manifold experiences present to it at a given time some one for particular accentuation, and to ignore the rest.

Also in 1879, James composed his "The Sentiment of Rationality" where he stated that "it is far too little recognized how entirely the intellect is built up of practical interests" (see James, 1899, p. 84).

References

- James, William. 1890. *Principles of Psychology*, 2 vols. Henry Holt and Company.
- James, William. 1899. *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy*. New York: Longmans, Green and Company.
- James, William. 1903. *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. London: Longmans, Green and Company.
- James, William. 1909. *The Meaning of Truth*. New York: Longmans, Green and Company.
- James, William. 1911. *Some Problems of Philosophy*. New York: Longmans, Green and Company.
- James, William, 1920a. *Collected Essays and Reviews*. New York: Longmans, Green and Company.
- James, William. 1920b. *The Letters of William James*, 2 vols, ed. Henry James III. Boston: The Atlantic Monthly Press.
- James, William. 1978. *Essays in Philosophy*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- James William. 1983. *Essays in Psychology*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- James, William. 1993. *The Correspondence of William James*, Vol. 2, William and Henry: 1885-1896, eds. I. Skrupskelis and E. Berkeley. Charlottesville, Virginia: university of Virginia Press
- Rorty, Richard. 1982. *Consequences of Pragmatism*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Seigfried, Charlene. 1990. *William James's Radical Reconstruction of Philosophy*. Albany: State University of New York Press.