
Preface

Science is hard work. It is also an endeavor that is inherently cautious and measured. All too often what seems to be a clear answer to a problem in one context surfaces as a poor interpretation in another. Scientists know this and because of this fact they usually try to stay close to their data when discussing their results in scholarly publications. That is how it should be.

At the same time, the stuff that drives scientists into their laboratories instead of onto the golf links is the passion to answer questions, hopefully important questions, about the nature of nature. Getting a fix on important questions and how to think about them from an experimental point of view is what scientists talk about, sometimes endlessly. It is those conversations that thrill and motivate. And yet, most of these exchanges are lost rather than being captured for the student.

One evening several years ago we were ending one of our dinner parties that my wife and I host when a speaker comes to town. We love these evenings, as they represent a time when we can pursue a topic with our guests with all gloves off. After one such occasion a friend remarked that it was a pity not to have the conversations somehow available for

others. It had been a particularly lively evening. It was then I thought of doing interviews with famous scientists for the *Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience*.

Over the past few years I have carried out a number of interviews on topics that range from molecular mechanisms to philosophical issues. Each interview has been managed on e-mail, the new glue that binds us all. Overall they take about 10 days to complete, after which the participant and I review the product and make small adjustments. Most of it, however, is not changed a whit, and out of that comes a spontaneity and zip from the interviewees that makes for good reading and gives great insight into the way they think.

The *Journal* will continue to do these interviews. We decided, however, we were at a point where they should be brought together as a unit for the public to enjoy.

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