van Fraassen, Bas (b. 1941), Dutch-American philosopher who has developed constructive empiricism, which is among the most significant forms of empiricism in the philosophy of science. On this view, science aims to provide empirically adequate theories that are true of the observable realm, but need not be true simpliciter. In *The Scientific Image* (1980), this conception was developed together with an empiricist account of explanation (as answers to why-questions) and a modal interpretation of probability that avoids commitment to real modalities in nature. To challenge the view that science is committed to such modalities, in *Laws and Symmetry* (1989) van Fraassen questioned the adequacy of the concept of a law of nature; he argued that *symmetry* (as achieved by transformations that leave relevant structures invariant) is better suited to play the traditional role assigned to laws. A detailed case study in the context of quantum mechanics then followed: *Quantum Mechanics: An Empiricist View* (1991). After developing an empiricist view of science, van Fraassen shifted his attention to the nature of empiricism. In *The Empirical Stance* (2002), instead of conceptualizing empiricism as a doctrine (a set of beliefs), he argued that it is better understood as a stance: an attitude, in the sense of an epistemic policy. This conception avoided the incoherence of earlier empiricist proposals that failed to satisfy their own empiricist standards, and paved the way for examining the nature of scientific representation and its role in science (*Scientific Representation*, 2008). Born in The Netherlands, van Fraassen is now an American citizen and Emeritus Professor of Philosophy at Princeton University,

*See also* constructive empiricism, empiricism, philosophy of science