

Everyday Memory



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ذاكرة كل يوم

المحررون: سفين ماجنسن و تور هستروب

THE STATEMENTS SUCH AS 'IT IS A MEMORY when you think of it' or 'memory binds our mental life together' highlight the mysterious nature of our ability to acquire, store and vividly recollect such diverse events as our first day in school. Mankind has always been bewildered as to how we remember and forget information and fascinated by our ethereal experiences of *déjà vu*. Initially, it was the philosophers' role to speculate on such matters; later the baton was passed to great physiologists such Karl Lashley and Ramón y Cajal to excavate the 'engram', a supposedly neural repository for memory traces. The quest for the 'engram' did not bear fruit until it came to the attention of Donald O Hebb and Erik Kandel. The impetus they gave to the subject became a catalyst for the development of cognitive psychology as one of the main ways to decipher how we remember and recall, and, for that matter, forget.

Stemming from this background and written by a team of international authors not previously credited to be household names in the field, this volume synthesizes diverse research portfolios on memory. This new breed of authors from Italy to Norway was invited by the Norwegian Academy of Science to tell the story of different aspects of everyday memory. They do this succinctly producing a volume that is basically a collection of detailed review chapters, which update the reader on the latest thinking as to how memory operates in

everyday contexts. The topics are covered are diverse though the authors do not profess to have covered exhaustively all of the conflicting paradigms in the field. The approach is balanced with a wealth of novel information synthesized with clarity and exemplified with clinical and social vignettes. The volume is divided into 13 chapters, each chapter being followed by a comprehensive reference list and author index.

The topics under scrutiny in *Everyday Memory* include a chapter on metaphors employed by researchers as well as the general public to fill gap between the process of encoding and retrieval. The other themes covered constitute what is what in the taxonomy of human memory systems from declarative to implicit memory types. Each chapter tackles different themes with palatable headings including: visuospatial memory; recalling actions; odour memory; autobiographical memory; collaborative memory; illusion and false memories; expertise; memory impairment; meta-cognition; functional memory and retrieval processes. Some of the topics are summarised with examples of public attitudes and knowledge towards different aspects of memory. It is commonly assumed that memory should be investigated in the laboratory rather via attitudinal self-rated questionnaires. The authors of this volume ostensibly show us the relevance of the latter approach despite the view that our cognition is often vulnerable to distortion. Also, I should not forget to mention my favorite

chapter of this volume. It is the one that goes under the fancy banner, 'Memory illusions and false memories in the real world.' Although this chapter repeats some concepts discussed elsewhere in the volume, its originality as well as the breath and depth of its scope is unquestionable. Its coverage of controversial false memory and its review of the psychology of the eyewitness errors borders on surrealism, but it is narrated with reference to all the relevant literature in the field to the extent that a reader will not think that she or he is reading Joseph Conrad.

The title of this volume, *Everyday Memory*, entices me to think that some people might think this book will feature in Oprah Winfrey's chat shows. But we should not judge the book by its title. Its content is too technical for the general public. The coverage may be too advanced even for undergraduate students. The volume can be a useful resource for those who teach

the cognitive science of learning and memory. It carries a vast reservoir of information on the latest theories as to how memory works in every day situations. One of the assets of this volume is that it has decoded scientific jargon into language that could be easily grasped by any interested researcher. Being unduly pessimistic of my own memory, I find it hard to remember a more readable and informative guide to the field than this volume - but my memory could be wrong.

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