

JNM

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Randoms

A TREE FALLS IN THE FOREST

How is it that our memory is good enough to retain the least triviality that happens to us, and yet not good enough to recollect how often we have told it to the same person?

- DUC DE LA ROCHEFOUCAULD

Things happen. The mind creates engrams based on the events that become embedded in our grey matter. As the engrams are replayed, we recall the event—to contemplate when lying down and rising up. A memory.

Memory connects this moment to our past. A well-organized memory provides instant recall of a lifetime of data with minimal cues. The great philosophical insights are stored next to the embarrassing moments. It is not surprising that a system so ready to serve may occasionally perform the unwanted task of reminding us of something we would rather forget. Like pictures taken with a blinding strobelight, too bright, too harsh, too real, the missed opportunities, the unrightable wrongs, all come flooding back. Not just the event itself, but all the associations. The coding for the process must go to the core of being, to revive the sights, smells, voices, and feelings with such overwhelming power.

It is impossible to think without remembering something. We can remember the name of the girl with pigtails in second grade, the prize winning thought that came and went before we could write it down, and the feeling we had when the dean posted the notice on the bulletin board that all present members of the senior class will graduate.

Although memory sometimes serves too well, occasionally it fails to function. You know you know, but you can't remember. You can picture the face, but where is the name? You know he likes his martini shaken, not stirred, but what is his name?

When the mind says "file not found," are we suffering from advancing age, the first signs of memory disorder, or just high input overload? Knowing you know, but not being able to remember is a cause of great anxiety.

It is now time for my next meeting with what's-her-name to discuss. . . Damn! Where are those engrams when I need them?

H. William Strauss
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