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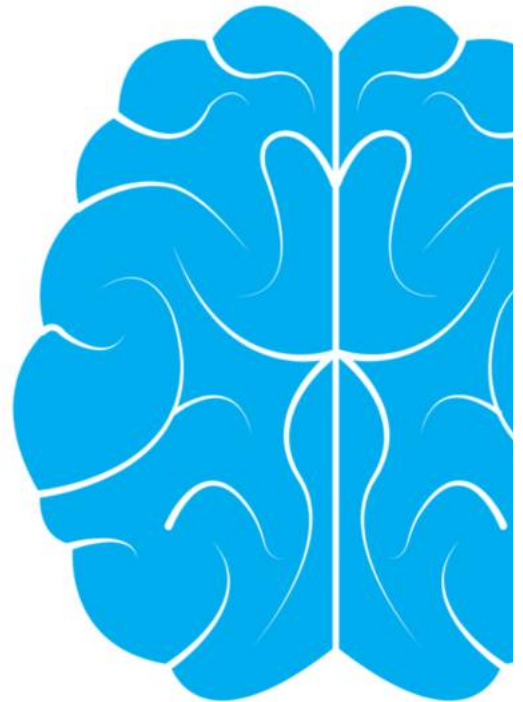
Memory Notes

Post 7/17

TOK NOTES

WOKs: Language, Sense Perception, Emotion,
Reason, Imagination, Faith, Intuition and
Memory

AOKs: Arts, Ethics, History, Human Sciences,
Indigenous Knowledge Systems, Mathematics,
Natural Sciences, and Religious Knowledge
Systems



ToK Notes

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Memory Quotes

- "We can invent only with memory." (Alphonse Karr)
- "Memory and imagination help [a man] as he works. Not only his own thoughts, but the thoughts of the men of past ages guide his hands; and, as a part of the human race, he creates." (William Morris)
- "Memory feeds imagination." (Amy Tan)
- "Memory is imagination in reverse." (Stephen Evans)
- "Memory is deceptive because it is coloured by today's events." (Albert Einstein)
- "It's surprising how much memory is built around things unnoticed at the time." (Barbara Kingsolver)

- "Memory is man's greatest friend and worst enemy." (Gilbert Parker)
- "I always think everything is going to last forever, but nothing ever does. In fact nothing exists longer than an instant except the thing that we hold in memory." (Sam Savage)
- "No memory is ever alone; it's at the end of a trail of memories, a dozen trails that each have their own associations." (Louis L'Amour)
- "Language is memory and metaphor." (Storm Jameson)
- "Nothing fixes a thing so intensely in the memory as the wish to forget it." (Michel de Montaigne)
- "What matters in life is not what happens to you but what you remember and how you remember it." (Gabriel García Márquez)

Memory Definitions

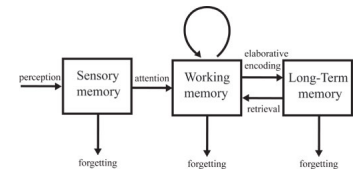
- Memory is the faculty of the mind by which information is encoded, stored, and retrieved (Atkinson & Shiffrin, 1968).
- Memory is "The faculty by which the mind stores and remembers information." ([Oxford Dictionaries](#))

How memory works

A very basic explanation would say that memory is a process of:

1. Perceiving something
2. Information from your perception is sent to your working memory. Information can be retrieved from here (remembered).
3. A fraction of the information in your working memory is sent to your long-term memory, where it can be retrieved.

For a more detailed explanation of more of the processes involved, have a look at the Download on this page called "Comic Explainer: How Memory Works. It does a great job of going through some of the processes involved in making memories. It's worth your time.



Things that affect memories

People tend to trust their memories more than they should. This comes up a lot in discussions about eye witness testimonies in court. People can be absolutely sure they saw or heard something, which they didn't.

Here are a few things that can affect memory:

- **Attention.** Memories are only formed when we observe something. We can't remember things that we didn't notice in the first place.
- **Time.** Obviously time is a big thing that affects memories. If we noticed that something just happened to us, our working memory would have a record of it. But if it happened years ago, it's likely the long-term memory won't have a very good record of it.
- **Mnemonics.** Strategies like the Memory Palace or even this PEDMAS example can help us encode memories into easier to remember parts, which we can review easily later.
- **Stories.** The memories we form are affected by the narrative (the story) we are telling ourselves in a given situation (Ramachandran) or the stories others we tell about an event after it has occurred.
- **Repetition.** Reviewing memories in our head helps to keep them fresh. People who experience Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) feel they are reliving the traumatic event continually. The memory stays very fresh because the sufferers keep replaying the traumatic event in their mind.
- **Health.** Aspects such as poor exercise, lack of sleep, and high levels of anxiety can also reduce the brain's ability to store new memories.

Confidence and memory

When we feel very confident about a certain memory, when we're sure something happened, this is a good indicator that it probably did happen. However, it's hard to know when we should trust other people's confidence in their memories. Some people are just more or less confident in general. As the Katherine Harmon (citing [this](#) survey) wrote, "...more than a third (37.1 percent) of people thought that "confident" testimony from a witness should be adequate for a criminal conviction. However ... "the link between confidence and accuracy across individuals is more tenuous, in part because people differ in their baseline levels of expressed confidence." (Harmon)

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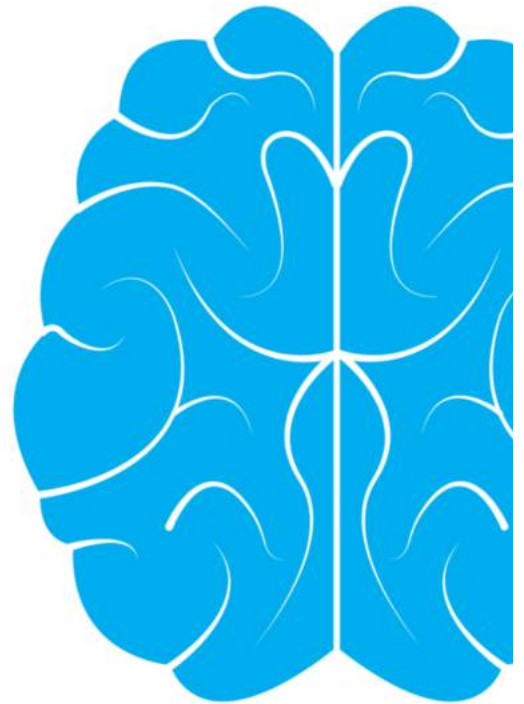
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