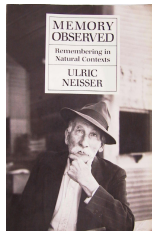


How people use the past



1978

Neisser's observation

- "If X is an interesting memory phenomenon, psychologists avoid it like the plague."

Important idea #1

- Does "memory" in general exist?
 - It is known to be a holdover from a medieval psychology.
 - Shall we assume that the ancients guessed correctly about the classes of mental phenomena?
 - "In studying memory we do not know how to separate different kinds of cases. Indeed, we cannot even be sure whether any natural lines of demarcation exist."

Important idea #2

- Ecological validity and representativeness
 - Naturalists and naturalistic observations
 - Ethology, upset learning theory by showing that "learning" (as it was conceived in psychological theory) is not a useful category for understanding animal behavior
 - Esoteric tasks, puzzles, and the cultural process of finding good representations

Neisser's attempt to change the category called "memory"

- How people use their own past experiences in meeting the present and the future under natural conditions.

Our bigger issue

- Not just memory
- How people use their minds under natural conditions.

Important Questions

- What is the purpose and nature of remembering?
- How do we remember?
- Why do we sometimes fail?
- Who remembers what and why?
- What do students remember of classes?
- Are there functionally different types of memory in everyday life? If so, what are they?

Using the past to construct our selves

- Involuntary memories
- Recovered (or constructed) memories
- Memory of childhood experiences
- Cole's example "She won't be a rugby player" (prolepsis)

Official remembering

- Eyewitness testimony (Elizabeth Loftus)
- Remembering history
- Flashbulb memories
- Kunagesa's memory for magic

Kunagesa A magician from Okaiboma Village



An ecological view

- Remembering as a skill
- Cultural practices as cognitive enzymes
 - We are good at remembering the information required for our skilled performances.
 - And we may not remember information that is consistently present, but is not required for skilled performance.

It is not going to be easy.

- "The psychological laboratory is the easiest setting in which to work, but it is also among the least interesting"
- "The realistic study of memory is much harder than the work we have been accustomed to."
- To find out about how people make use of the past in their everyday lives, we must look carefully at the everyday world.

But we could do it with our
cognitoscope

- If it was properly tuned.