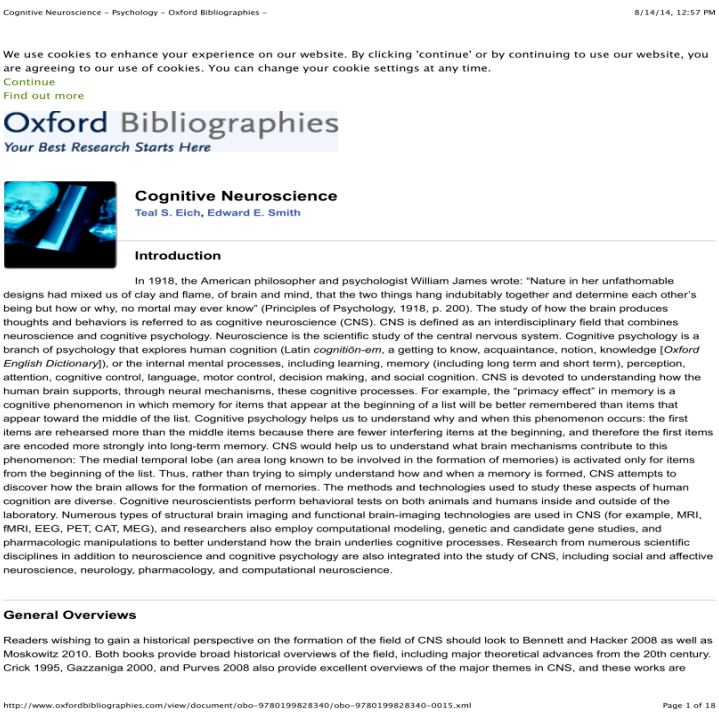
Origins And Development Of Recollection: Perspectives From Psychology And Neuroscience



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Cognitive Neuroscience
Teal S. Eich, Edward E. Smith

Introduction

In 1918, the American philosopher and psychologist William James wrote: "Nature in her unfathomable designs had mixed us of clay and flame, of brain and mind, that the two things hang indubitably together and determine each other's being but how or why, no mortal may ever know" (Principles of Psychology, 1918, p. 200). The study of how the brain produces thoughts and behaviors is referred to as cognitive neuroscience (CNS). CNS is defined as an interdisciplinary field that combines neuroscience and cognitive psychology. Neuroscience is the scientific study of the central nervous system. Cognitive psychology is a branch of psychology that explores human cognition (Latin *cognitiōn-em*, a getting to know, acquaintance, notion, knowledge [*Oxford English Dictionary*]), or the internal mental processes, including learning, memory (including long term and short term), perception, attention, cognitive control, language, motor control, decision making, and social cognition. CNS is devoted to understanding how the human brain supports, through neural mechanisms, these cognitive processes. For example, the "primacy effect" in memory is a cognitive phenomenon in which memory for items that appear at the beginning of a list will be better remembered than items that appear toward the middle of the list. Cognitive psychology helps us to understand why and when this phenomenon occurs: the first items are rehearsed more than the middle items because there are fewer interfering items at the beginning, and therefore the first items are encoded more strongly into long-term memory. CNS would help us to understand what brain mechanisms contribute to this phenomenon: The medial temporal lobe (an area long known to be involved in the formation of memories) is activated only for items from the beginning of the list. Thus, rather than trying to simply understand how and when a memory is formed, CNS attempts to discover how the brain allows for the formation of memories. The methods and technologies used to study these aspects of human cognition are diverse. Cognitive neuroscientists perform behavioral tests on both animals and humans inside and outside of the laboratory. Numerous types of structural brain imaging and functional brain-imaging technologies are used in CNS (for example, MRI, fMRI, EEG, PET, CAT, MEG), and researchers also employ computational modeling, genetic and candidate gene studies, and pharmacologic manipulations to better understand how the brain underlies cognitive processes. Research from numerous scientific disciplines in addition to neuroscience and cognitive psychology are also integrated into the study of CNS, including social and affective neuroscience, neurology, pharmacology, and computational neuroscience.

General Overviews

Readers wishing to gain a historical perspective on the formation of the field of CNS should look to Bennett and Hacker 2008 as well as Moskowitz 2010. Both books provide broad historical overviews of the field, including major theoretical advances from the 20th century. Crick 1995, Gazzaniga 2000, and Purves 2008 also provide excellent overviews of the major themes in CNS, and these works are

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