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The Missing Moment: How the Unconscious Shapes Modern Science

Robert Pollack

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In THE MISSING MOMENT a distinguished molecular biologist explores the nature of time and argues for a radical rethinking of how time affects our sense of self, our mortality, and the future of science and medicine. Only in the past few years have we learned enough about the brain for this remarkable book to be written. We know now that our brains continually filter the present through memories and emotions of the past. In fact, strictly speaking, we live in the past: since it takes the brain a second to process perceptions, what we think is the present actually happened a second ago. We also know where and how the unconscious operates and how painful memories are repressed; repression is not a psychological defect but an evolutionary necessity for our species. All thought, even the most rational, is permeated with unconscious feelings, fears, and emotions. Scientists, like the rest of us, make choices for reasons they don't understand. Thus the direction of scientific research is driven by private demons, not public needs. We can see this in medical science, where doctors develop the tools to diagnose genetic diseases they cannot cure, bringing pain rather than comfort to patients. Today science can do more good than ever before, and it can also do more harm. The time has come for scientists and others to abandon the notion that there is any such thing as the disinterested pursuit of truth. Instead, they must strive for a therapeutic self-awareness of their unconscious agendas and work for larger goals than personal immortality.

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