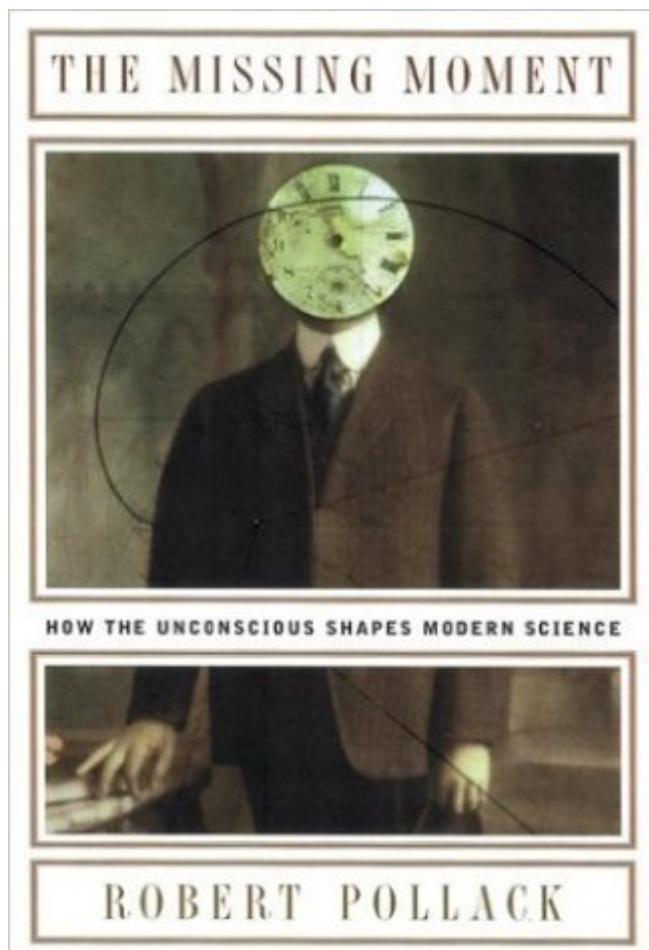


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The Missing Moment: How The Unconscious Shapes Modern Science



Synopsis

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.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Pollack's fascinatingly presented--and infuriatingly argued--book makes two contentions: that

medical science spends most of its efforts on defying the inevitability of death (rather than preventing disease and alleviating suffering), and that the reason for this lopsided strategy is a collective unconscious fear of death by most health professionals. "The Missing Moment" of the title refers both metaphorically to the gap between knowledge and wisdom and literally to the half second during which unconscious machinations affect and transform the thoughts and actions of everyone--including scientists.Pollack's first argument is expertly and cogently presented in, strangely enough, the second half of the book. The author discusses infectious diseases, cancer, and aging; he convincingly (and rightly) shows that the medical establishment has come to rely too heavily on antibiotics to cure infection (rather than vaccines to achieve deterrence), risky and painful procedures to treat cancer (rather than behavioral and environmental changes to prevent it), and attempts to delay death (rather than efforts to improve the quality of one's remaining life). The informative notes are not to be skipped, and a must-read appendix outlines Pollack's views for a more humane medical agenda.In the first half of the book, however, Pollack dilutes the force of his appeal by waving a Freudian wand and suggesting that health professionals are blinded by a collective unconscious desire: their own fear of death.

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