COGNITION AND MOTIVATION

This collection examines the many internal and external factors affecting cognitive processes. Editor Shulamith Kreitler brings together a wide range of international contributors to produce an outstanding assessment of recent research in the field. The contributions go beyond the standard approach of examining the effects of motivation and emotion to consider the contextual factors that may influence cognition. These broad and varied factors include personality, genetics, mental health, biological evolution, culture, and social context. By contextualizing cognition, this volume draws out the practical applications of theoretical cognitive research and brings separate areas of scholarship into meaningful dialogue.

Shulamith Kreitler is a professor of psychology at Tel Aviv University. Her work focuses on the cognitive foundations of meaning, creativity, and personality as well as psycho-oncology and behavior disorders. In addition to her work at Tel Aviv University, Professor Kreitler teaches regularly at the University of Haifa and is director of the Psycho-oncology Research Center at the Sheba Medical Center.

Cognition and Motivation

Forging an Interdisciplinary Perspective

Edited by

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This book is dedicated to the memory of Hans Kreitler (1916–1993), my late husband, who accompanied me with love and inspiration for many years along the road of cognitive and motivational explorations in science and life

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Foreword

Jerome Bruner

The interaction of motivation and cognition continues to be one of the central dilemmas in what we now call the human sciences – psychology included. And it has been so from the earliest times; witness Aristotle's searching examination of the dilemma in the *De Anima*. At the outset, cognition is both driven by its own intrinsic motives, like the need for closure or completion, and shaped or influenced by presumably extrinsic motives, like a sexual craving or a desire for dominance. I say "presumably" because closer inspection makes clear that this distinction is misleading.

Alas, as psychology strove to become a "laboratory science," it increasingly divorced itself from the in vivo study of human action, tending to obscure or ignore the critical interdependence of motivation and cognition. Now, at last, we are returning to the in vivo study of the life of mind, and to the ancient and subtle issue of the interaction between desiring and knowing. The present book is a striking example of this new trend. Yet, for all that, it is not altogether a "new" trend: it has always lurked in the background formulation of psychology. How could it not? After all, what impels cognition? What shapes our motives?

Here I must become somewhat autobiographical. When I was a young instructor in psychology at Harvard in the mid-twentieth century, senior colleagues were fond of drawing a distinction between what they called biotropic and sociotropic psychology. The former treated psychological functions as, so to speak, self-contained and rooted in the presumably inherent, if slightly alterable, properties of the nervous system. The biotropic system was (and had to be) describable in the "centimeters-grams-seconds" system (the famous CGS system) of the natural sciences. Sociotropic psychology, on the other hand, looked outward to such matters as culture, social and educational background, and personal desires, among others. The implicit assumption, of course, was that when the sociotropes became scientifically biotropic, they would behave biotropically like their more scientific colleagues.

I was in those days principally interested in the nature of perception – perception in the everyday world, not just in the strictly controlled dark room. It became plain to me early that what we perceived and how we contextualized it was a function not only of what we desired or expected to see but how, necessarily, we went about perceptually structuring what we encountered – necessarily in the sense that there was no such thing as "neutral" perception. Phenomenal experience, in a word, was as much an outcome of our expectancies as it was of a so-called stimulus input. And so, we "regularized" and "conventionalized" stimulus inputs not only in terms of the stimulus impinging on our sense organs, but in accordance with our established expectancies.

Indeed, I shocked some of my more staid senior colleagues at that time by referring to this as the "hypothesis theory of perception." Those were the early days of the so-called New Look in perception. In a word, cognition and motivation were, in vivo, inseparable, even in such seemingly neutral domains as size perception. I recall with amusement now that when one of our studies showed that poor kids overestimated the size of coins more than well-off kids, *The New York Times* ran a story on it, but some of my then-biotrope senior colleagues were definitely not amused: "What are you trying to do, upset the Weber–Fechner law?"

What is striking about the present volume is its rejection of that old separatism. In its opening chapter, for example, Arie W. Kruglanski and Anna Sheveland refer to a "need for cognitive closure." Is it a motive or is it intrinsic in cognition itself? Well, it may be specific or nonspecific. It may be strongly driven or not. If nonspecific and lightly driven, it comes close to what we speak of as "reflection." If the opposite, we speak of it as some sort of "bias." Why then strictly classify the processes involved as either strictly motivational or strictly cognitive? The two are inseparable, and they lead to broader so-called behavioral tendencies as well – like, for example, that those given to a strong need for cognitive closure tend to be more intolerant of the unusual. But let us also bear in mind that the two necessarily work in close and necessary concert. What is to be gained by irreparably separating cognition and motivation? Neither could function without the other.

So let me close these introductory remarks with a "Bravo!" for this book. Cognition and motivation simply cannot operate independently of each other. The task is to delineate more clearly (and more empirically) the nature of their intrinsic reliance on each other, and this book is a real step in that direction.