PHILOSOPHY

FORGETTING CURVE

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There are news on the "forgetting curve"

In 1885, Hermann Ebbinghaus collected data to plot a forgetting curve. Today, we approximate forgetting with an exponential curve where R is retrievability (a measure of how easy it is to retrieve a piece of information from memory), S is stability of memory (determines how fast R falls over time in the absence of training, testing or other recall), and t is time.

The Atlantic now adds to this

In the internet age, recall memory—the ability to spontaneously call information up in your mind—has become less necessary. It's still good for bar trivia, or remembering your to-do list, but largely, Horvath says, what's called recognition memory is more important. "So long as you know where that information is at and how to access it, then you don't really need to recall it," he says … Socrates hates writing because he thinks it's going to kill memory," Horvath says. "And he's right. Writing absolutely killed memory. But think of all the incredible things we got because of writing. I wouldn't trade writing for a better recall memory, ever." Perhaps the internet offers a similar tradeoff: You can access and consume as much information and entertainment as you want, but you won't retain most of it.