

SPATIAL LEARNING AND COGNITION

Psicológica celebrates the retirement of Professor Nicholas Mackintosh from the Chair of Psychology at the University of Cambridge (U.K.) with the publication of this monograph, where some of his contributions to Spanish Experimental Psychology are well documented.

Preface

The scope of this monograph is indicated well enough by its title. The papers that follow all discuss various topics in the general area of spatial learning and cognition – topics which have been the subject of much innovative research over the past two or three decades. Although some of that research has studied spatial cognition in humans, the emphasis in this monograph is on studies of non-human animals – how they acquire spatial knowledge, and how they use that knowledge to find their way about the world. To talk of the acquisition of spatial knowledge is to adopt a cognitively orientated point of view, one that is now widespread in the study of animal learning. A central question addressed in several of the papers is whether spatial learning differs in kind from the learning that occurs in experiments on classical and instrumental conditioning. These are surely specialised mechanisms deployed in spatial navigation, such as the use of the sun as a compass, but spatial and non-spatial learning may also share many features in common, and several papers examine the extent to which this is or is not true, while others focus on the brain mechanisms underlying spatial learning and navigation in both birds and mammals.

Readers of this monograph will, we hope, agree that much exciting research has been undertaken in the past 30 years, and our understanding of spatial learning and cognition has become incomparably more sophisticated. But much, of course, remains to be learned!

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