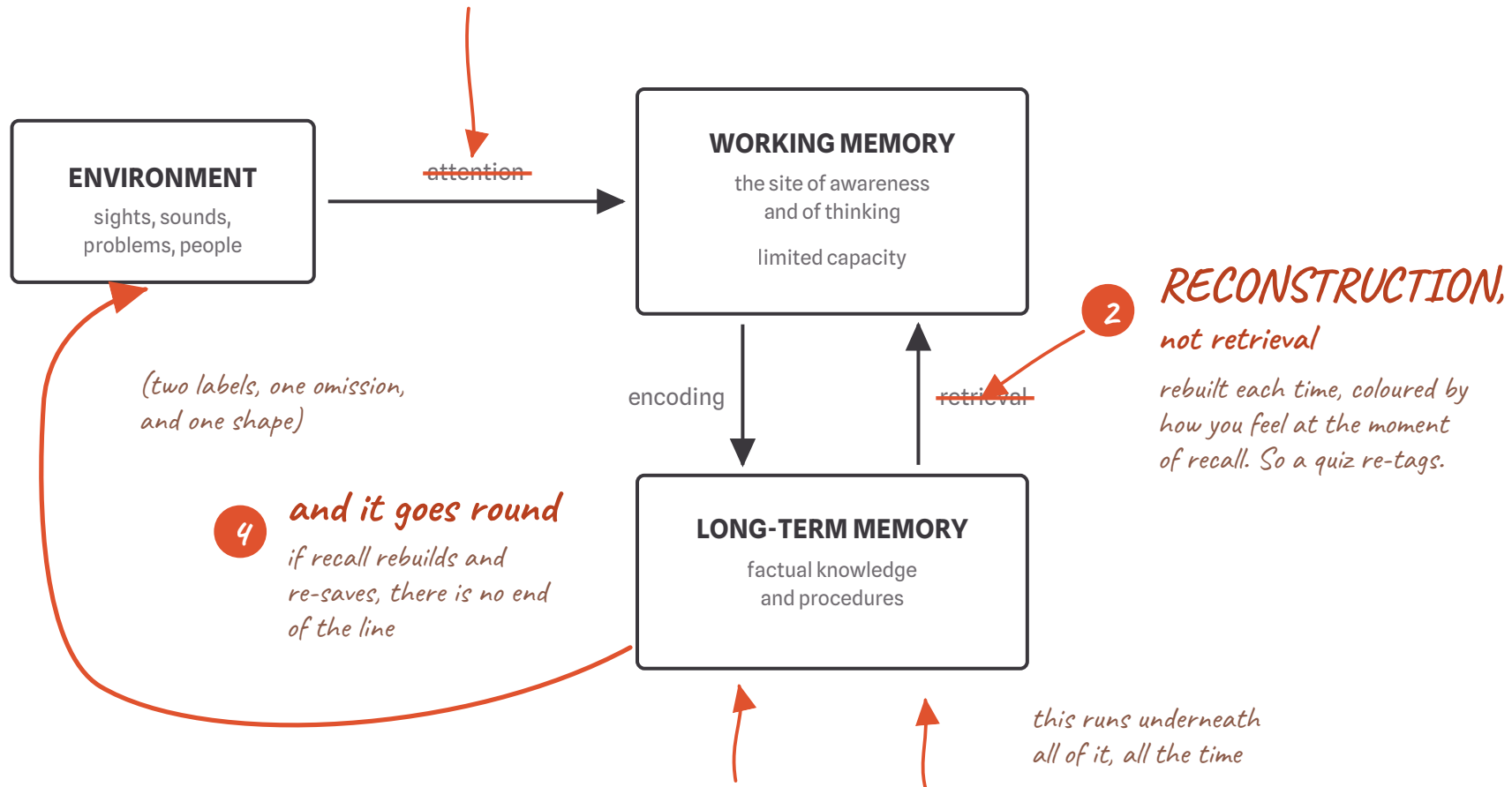


*the gate opens for what matters,
not for whatever we point at*

1 it isn't aimed, it's **SALIENCE**



3 **THE BODY:** the box that isn't on the page

always running, never neutral. Heart rate, gut, energy, safety. It sets what the gate is looking for, and it joins in again every time you remember.

1

A MISLABEL

attention → salience

The gate isn't aimed. It opens.

The arrow is commonly read as a beam the learner aims wherever the teacher indicates. Biologically, what gets through is decided by a significance check neither teacher nor student makes consciously: does this matter to me, personally, socially or culturally?

Attention is real. It just names the effect, not the cause. Damasio puts it the other way round: feelings grip the person and force attention onto the situation, which makes affect the thing that directs attention rather than a passenger in it (Damasio, 2018).

2

A CONTRADICTION

retrieval → reconstruction

Nothing is fetched back intact.

A store implies a file that comes back as it went in. Recall actually rebuilds, and briefly reopens the memory for editing while it does. What gets re-saved is shaped by how the learner feels at the moment of recall, not by the conditions of the original lesson.

In fairness, cognitive psychologists do not claim recall returns a file intact; reconstruction has been established since Bartlett in 1932, and Damasio describes recall as working a neural code in reverse to yield a more or less complete reconstruction. The error sits in the storage-and-retrieval metaphor, which imports a fidelity the evidence does not support, and which the diagram then teaches.

3

AN OMISSION

+ the missing box

The body was never on the page.

The printed model starts at the environment, as though the learner arrives as a blank processor. But there is always a body underneath: fed or hungry, safe or threatened, rested or not. That state sets what the gate is looking for and how much effort the system will spend.

It isn't an input. It's the condition everything else runs in, and it is involved at both ends: it shapes what gets through, and it joins in again when something is recalled. Nothing is stored in the body, but remembering brings a bodily state with it.

4

THE WRONG SHAPE

pipeline → cycle

There is no end of the line.

This one is not a label at all, it is the diagram's geometry. Read left to right, information enters, is processed, and is filed. But if recall rebuilds rather than returns, the output feeds back in: the schema you have built biases what you perceive next, before attention is deployed.

Correction 2 already implies this. A straight line cannot show it.

Underneath all four: a different epistemology, and a different purpose

The corrections above are specific and arguable one by one. But they share a root. The printed diagram is a **conduit**: information enters at the left, moves through stages, and is stored and returned unchanged. Every arrow assumes something crosses it intact.

Affective neuroscience says nothing crosses that pipe unchanged, because meaning is made rather than transmitted. Two learners given the identical explanation build different meanings, and that is the expected result, not a failure of delivery. Damasio is blunt about the category error: feelings, he writes, are not mere 'information' in the strict computational sense.

What this figure does not do is throw out the parts that work. Working memory really is limited. Novices really do benefit from clear models, worked examples and well-sequenced practice. Those findings sit inside the printed boxes and they hold. It is the metaphor they are wrapped in that does not.

There is a second, larger point, and it is easy to miss because the corrections above are all mechanical. Even with every one of them applied, the diagram still answers only one question: how does material get in, and how does it stay in. It does not ask what the material is for. On this account learning is acquisition, and a well-taught pupil is a well-stocked one.

The biology will not sit still inside that purpose. The same reflective machinery that consolidates gist is the machinery that builds a sense of self, and the longitudinal evidence tracks it to identity and life satisfaction rather than to recall. So a diagram that is biologically complete cannot stop at what a learner knows. It has to include who they are becoming, which is a claim about the point of teaching and not only about its mechanism.