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Psychology

**Why Everyone (Else) is a Hypocrite: Evolution and the Modular Mind**
Robert Kurzban
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With wit, wisdom, and occasional hilarity, Robert Kurzban offers explanations for why we do the things we do, such as morally condemning the sale of human organs and locking the refrigerator at night to keep from snacking.

Anyone who has ever wondered how the brain works will find Robert Kurzban's model of modularity fascinating and potentially life changing. His premise is that the brain is made up of many different modules that operate in a specialized fashion: some of them work on vision, some work on speech, some work on emotions, and so on. And they don't bother to talk to one another unless it's necessary for their particular function. This means that the "self" some of us are rather attached to is actually just one part of the brain, perhaps a very tiny part, that doesn't know much about what's going on in the rest of the modules because it doesn't need to. In fact, it might be detrimental to the whole person if the self were omniscient. While most of us assume that the "I" we're familiar with is like the president–in control, omniscient–Kurzban believes the "I" is more like a White House press secretary who operates on a need-to-know basis.

Modularity and its evolutionary development can explain the different ways we operate. It explains why we do some things without being able to explain why, and why we consider some actions morally offensive, even when we can't back our judgment up with plausible reason. Some module in our brain has an evolutionary reason to which our mouth has no access.

Kurzban touches on some complex topics in a manner that's both smart and accessible. He incorporates a plethora of psychological studies to support his theories but the narrative is never dry; his occasionally self-deprecating humor is always refreshing and his frequent references to popular television shows and movies are both a relief to the case studies and a good way to make the science behind his theory understandable. By challenging common assumptions about habits, morality, and preferences, Kurzban keeps readers both entertained and enlightened.

Readers who want to know the real reason behind their own explanation "just because" will find much to think about in *Why Everyone Else is a Hypocrite*. Even people who disagree with Kurzban's theories will have to admit his presentation is entertaining.

*Robert Kurzban*