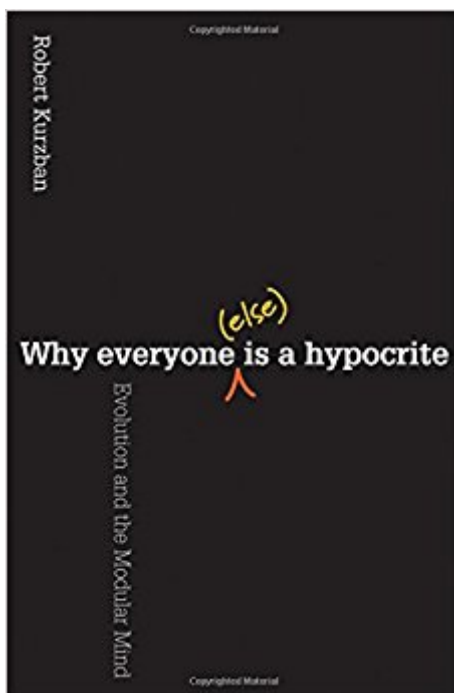


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# Why Everyone (Else) Is A Hypocrite: Evolution And The Modular Mind



## Synopsis

We're all hypocrites. Why? Hypocrisy is the natural state of the human mind. Robert Kurzban shows us that the key to understanding our behavioral inconsistencies lies in understanding the mind's design. The human mind consists of many specialized units designed by the process of evolution by natural selection. While these modules sometimes work together seamlessly, they don't always, resulting in impossibly contradictory beliefs, vacillations between patience and impulsiveness, violations of our supposed moral principles, and overinflated views of ourselves. This modular, evolutionary psychological view of the mind undermines deeply held intuitions about ourselves, as well as a range of scientific theories that require a "self" with consistent beliefs and preferences. Modularity suggests that there is no "I." Instead, each of us is a contentious "we"--a collection of discrete but interacting systems whose constant conflicts shape our interactions with one another and our experience of the world. In clear language, full of wit and rich in examples, Kurzban explains the roots and implications of our inconsistent minds, and why it is perfectly natural to believe that everyone else is a hypocrite.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Mod makes a comeback in an entertaining explanation of brain functioning that cuts the two-hemispheres theory down to size and minces the mind into modules. Coming from a background in evolutionary psychology, Kurzban suggests that the human mind is not the unified operator of actions contributing to survival and success, as many claim and even more assume, but

rather a multi-faceted system of functioning parts that are not always on the same side-or even aware of the same information. The modules perform different, often separate, functions, which can account for confusing, inconsistent, and apparently contradictory behavior and speech. Bolstered by recent studies and research, Kurzban makes a convincing and coherent, though hardly comprehensive, case for the modular mind, greatly helped by humorous footnotes and examples. Despite the first-time author's near absolution of hypocrites, promotion of ignorance, comparisons of humans to machines, and criticism of moral stances on abortion and drugs, his most controversial statements lie in the realm of the self; indeed, conventional understanding of a "self" ceases to even be plausible with the modular mind theory. Taking on lofty topics, including truth and belief, Kurzban makes a successful case for changing-and remapping-the modern mind. (c) Copyright PWxyz, LLC. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"Bolstered by recent studies and research, Kurzban makes a convincing and coherent . . . case for the modular mind, greatly helped by humorous footnotes and examples. . . . Taking on lofty topics, including truth and belief, Kurzban makes a successful case for changing--and remapping--the modern mind."--Publishers Weekly"Using humour and anecdotes, [Kurzban] reveals how conflict between the modules of the mind leads to contradictory beliefs, vacillating behaviours, broken moral boundaries and inflated egos. He argues that we should think of ourselves not as 'I' but as 'we'--a collection of interacting systems that are in constant conflict."--Nature"Robert Kurzban believes that we are all hypocrites. But not to worry, he explains, hypocrisy is the natural state of the human mind. In his book *Why Everyone (Else) Is a Hypocrite: Evolution and the Modular Mind*, Kurzban asserts that the human mind consists of many specialized units, which do not always work together seamlessly. When this harmony breaks down, people often develop contradictory beliefs."--Victoria Stern, *Scientific American Mind*"Kurzban is a luminary in the growing discipline of evolutionary psychology. . . . [P]rovocative. . . . Kurzban devotes much space to explicating and demonstrating ways in which his theory plays out in our everyday lives."--Library Journal"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. . . . 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. . . . By challenging common assumptions about habits, morality, and preferences, Kurzban keeps readers both entertained and enlightened."--Foreword Reviews"[Kurzban] argues that . . . internal conflicts are not limited to extreme cases; they occur in

everyone's brains, leading to illogical beliefs and contradictory behaviors. That's not necessarily a bad thing, according to Kurzban. In fact, being selectively irrational may give us an evolutionary advantage."--Kacie Glenn, Chronicle of Higher Education"Robert Kurzban has used his view of evolutionary psychology to pursue the concept of 'self' at the heart of both the discipline of psychology and the everyday understanding of human behavior--which surely is of interest to everyone. . . . The book itself is fresh. Kurzban's style is to take traditional questions and apparently reasonable positions and then demonstrate that reasonableness is actually only so under a set of assumptions--and that if they do not conform to the modularity hypothesis then we ought to rethink."--Tom Dickins, Times Higher Education"Highly recommended."--Jessica Palmer, Bioephemera blog"I'm sure that Why Everyone (Else) Is a Hypocrite will provoke a lot of controversy, and I'm certain that Kurzban's theses will require further refinement. But what a fascinating read!"--Brenda Jubin, Reading the Markets blog"[T]here is much that is valuable in Kurzban's book."--Peter Carruthers, Trends in Cognitive Sciences"We're all inconsistent and self-deceiving, says evolutionary psychologist Robert Kurzban. Our modular minds didn't evolve for consistency, but for patchwork multitasking. . . . As Kurzban says, understanding how and why we can be so 'ignorant, wrong, irrational, and hypocritical' may help us work towards a fairer society."--Susan Blackmore, BBC Focus"Kurzban brilliantly (and often hilariously) breaks down the system of functional modules, explaining their existence through evolution, and their hypocrisy through a lack of communication. Why Everyone (Else) is a Hypocrite delves into a part of psychology that has famously been ignored by many prominent members in the field."--Haley M. Dillon and Rachael A. Carmen, Journal of Social, Evolutionary, and Cultural Psychology

I think this is one of the first great works of the 21st century. While it does not contain any new theories it neatly and succinctly explains evolutionary psychology basics with beginner friendly examples (at least as friendly as can be for such a dense book). Having said that it is very dense and might not be the best first book on evolutionary psychology for those beginning their studies in evolutionary psychology. Chapter six is very dense and is replete with experiments that have been carried out and may not be easy to understand for beginners in psychological research. One might benefit from reading this book several times as the information becomes easier to understand with multiple readings.

This is one of the best and most important books of today in the field of evolutionary psychology (EP) about the new ways of looking at the human brain. It's very well written very clearly and can

reach an audience far beyond the experts. Robert Kurzban, in my opinion, is one of the most prominent evolutionary psychologists and his work will remain. The author shows us how it works our cognitive machinery in a modular perspective angle of the EP and thus helps to finish with some myths and classical visions of the brain and of individual decision-making processes. Worth a read and I strongly recommend.

By using a combination of facts, studies and anecdotes Robert Kurzban gives the reader an introduction of evolutionary psychology. I've only taken a 100 level college course on Psychology so I can't speak to what spectrum of the science it falls on. I did feel that the ideas were sound though and have had success using them to my advantage. For example: Kurzban likens the brain to an iPhone and the mind to the apps that are loaded on it. You can listen to music while you browse the internet. But you can't play a game and take notes at the same time. Knowing that, it's easy for me to visualize all of my behavior as some routine being run by a part of my mind. If I feel conflicted about something maybe it's because two "apps" are trying to run at the same time. Spending money on \$0.69 songs feels good in the moment but not later when I'm reviewing my checking account balance. If this sounds interesting to you then you should read the book. Robert Kurzban is much better at explaining the reasonings behind it.

"I" almost didn't purchase this book - what a serious mistake that would have been! Having read *The Ego Tunnel: The Science of the Mind and the Myth of the Self* by Philosopher Thomas Metzinger, I felt I was thoroughly acquainted with the notion that there is no self. Also, I have read *Predictably Irrational: The Hidden Forces That Shape Our Decisions* by Behavioral Economist Dan Ariely, *The Happiness Hypothesis: Finding Modern Truth in Ancient Wisdom* by Psychologist Jonathan Haidt, and *How the Mind Works* by Psychologist Steven Pinker (all three cited by Kurzban). Now, I don't mean to name drop, I simply say that to say this: *Why Everyone (Else) Is a Hypocrite* is better. Yes, better. Kurzban states in the Prologue, "This book is...an attempt to explain why we act the way we act, and, perhaps partly in our defense, to show that if we are wrong a lot, well, being right isn't everything. My argument is going to be that much, or at least some, of what makes us ignorant, mind-numbingly stupid - and hypocritical - is that we evolved to play many different kinds of strategic games with others, and our brains are built to exploit the fact that being knowledgeable, right, or morally consistent is not always to our advantage. Because humans are such social creatures, while being right is still really important, it's very far from everything. In fact, being ignorant, wrong, irrational, and hypocritical can make you

much better off than being knowledgeable, correct, reasonable, and consistent."The amount of research that Dr. Kurzban utilizes in fulfilling this aim is staggering. There are many classic examples (i.e. Muller-Lyer Illusion, "Spandrels," "Framing Effects") but, also plenty that were new on me. Also, and more importantly, I loved the presentation. Kurzban's style is wry, witty, and always entertaining. I was laughing throughout. I loved the method, the material, and the message. As a long-time fan of evolutionary psychology, this certainly is a welcome addition; Dr. Kurzban is definitely one of my new favorite authors. Also, the new information dovetailed nicely with what I read in "A Self Comes to Mind: Constructing the Conscious Brain" by Antonio Damasio, "The Tell-Tale Brain: A Neuroscientist's Quest for What Makes Us Human" by V.S. Ramachandran, and "Your Brain Is (Almost) Perfect: How We Make Decisions" by Read Montague; I just might have to re-read some of my favorites with this new modularity view in mind. In sum, this is a great book and I highly recommend it to anyone interested in morality, Philosophy of Mind, psychology, economics, social policy...well, everyone really. Here is one more great quote, "Modularity explains why everyone is a hypocrite. Moral(istic) modules constrain others' behavior. The mob's moral sticks can be used to prevent an arbitrarily wide set of acts. At the same time, other modules advance our own fitness interests, often by doing the very same acts our moral modules condemn. In this sense, the explanation for hypocrisy lies in the rather quotidian notion of competition. Organisms are designed to advance their own fitness interests, which entails harming others and helping oneself and one's allies. Hypocrisy is, in its most abstract sense, no different from other kinds of competition."

Omi gwad! This author brings a very meaningful and sensible perspective to evolutionary psychology. He adds tremendous value to an already invaluable framework of evolutionary psychology. He seems to have added the key pieces of puzzle, that explains human nature and its seeming contradictions. It is a book about science but can be a self-help book for the wisdom that it imparts. I would urge the author to take up "So what?" in his next book. Given these hard facts, I would like him to challenge the very purpose of human life and life itself? How would human animal, make meaning out of this meaningless but seemingly serious game.

This book has answers to questions we've been asking and will continue to ask for a long time. It views human inconsistency (including hypocrisy) as the result of our evolved mind, which consists of many distinct "modules" designed to perform specific tasks. Some modules have no knowledge of each other, others are designed to accomplish opposing tasks. According to Kurzban, this is what

makes human behavior seem irrational, inconsistent, and at times unpredictable. So, if you want to move beyond the outdated view of the human being as rational, consistent, and singular, I highly recommend this book. It will immediately change how you conceptualize yourself and the people around you.

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