

Précis of *Beyond modularity: A developmental perspective on cognitive science*

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Abstract. *Beyond modularity* attempts a synthesis of Piaget's anti-constructivist nativism and Piaget's individualist constructivism. Contra Piaget, I argue that: (1) the study of cognitive development is essential to cognitive science; (2) the modularist processing dichotomy is too rigid; and (3) the mind does not begin with prepackaged modules; rather, development involves a gradual process of "assimilationization." Contra Piaget, I argue that: (1) development rarely involves stage-like domain-general change and (2) domain-specific predispositions give development a small but significant kickstart by focusing the infant's attention on propiety inputs. Development does not stop at efficient learning. A fundamental aspect of human development ("representational redescription") is the hypothesized process by which information that is in a cognitive system becomes progressively explicit knowledge to that system. Development thus involves two complementary processes of progressive modularization and progressive "explicitization." Empirical findings on the child as linguist, physicist, mathematician, psychologist, and motorist are discussed in support of the theoretical framework. Each chapter considers first on the initial state of the infant used/abused on subsequent domain-specific learning in infancy and early childhood. It then goes on to explore that, as older children's problem solving and theory building, with particular focus on evolving cognitive flexibility. Emphasis is placed throughout on the status of representations underlying different capacities and on the multiple levels at which knowledge is stored and accessible. Finally, consideration is given to the need for more formal developmental models, and a comparison is made between representational, redescription and representational derivations of development. In conclusion, I consider what is special about human cognition by specializing on the status of representations underlying the structure of behavior in other species.

Keywords: cognitive development; constructionism; domain-specific/domain-general; modularity; nativism/constructivism; other species; phase versus stage; representational redescription

It is less illogical than it first appears to speak
of instincts for inventiveness.
(Marler 1984, p. 802)

1. Taking the developmental perspective seriously

Beyond modularity: A developmental perspective on cognitive science (Karmiloff-Smith, 1982a) not only aims to reach developmental psychologists, but also strives to persuade cognitive scientists to treat cognitive development as a serious theoretical science contributing to the discussion of how the human mind/brain develops and is organized internally, and not merely as a case empirical database underpinning the questions of the age at which external behavior can be observed. Nowadays much of the literature focuses on what cognitive science can offer the study of development. In *Beyond modularity*, I concentrate on what a developmental perspective can offer cognitive science and attempt to pinpoint what is specifically human about human cognition.

As Piaget's enunciation of the sensorimotor infant is being severely undermined by some paradigms for study-

ing infancy, the battle between nativism and constructivism once again rears its rather unconstructive head. In *Beyond modularity*, I do not choose between these two epistemological stances, one arguing for predominantly built-in, domain-specific knowledge, and the other for a rigorous stance underpinning the subsequent domain-general learning. Rather, I suggest that nativism (when re-defined within a truly epigenetic perspective of genetic expression rather than genetic unfolding), on the one hand, and Piaget's constructivism, on the other, are complementary in foundational ways, and that the ultimate theory of human cognition will encompass aspects of both. *Beyond modularity* is intended to excite the reader about the possibilities of a developmental perspective embracing both domain-specific predispositions and constructivism and to demonstrate that one can attribute various modular/processed structures to the human genome without denying the crucial roles of the physical and sociocultural environments and without jeopardizing the deep-seated conviction that we are special – creative, cognitively flexible, capable of conscious reflection, novel invention, and occasional inordinate stupidity!

Developmental psychologists of the Piagetian school

Beyond Modularity A Developmental Perspective On Cognitive Science

**Nicholas Allott, Terje Lohndal, Georges
Rey**



Beyond Modularity A Developmental Perspective On Cognitive Science:

Decoding **Beyond Modularity A Developmental Perspective On Cognitive Science**: Revealing the Captivating Potential of Verbal Expression

In a period characterized by interconnectedness and an insatiable thirst for knowledge, the captivating potential of verbal expression has emerged as a formidable force. Its power to evoke sentiments, stimulate introspection, and incite profound transformations is genuinely awe-inspiring. Within the pages of "**Beyond Modularity A Developmental Perspective On Cognitive Science**," a mesmerizing literary creation penned by a celebrated wordsmith, readers set about an enlightening odyssey, unraveling the intricate significance of language and its enduring impact on our lives. In this appraisal, we shall explore the book's central themes, evaluate its distinctive writing style, and gauge its pervasive influence on the hearts and minds of its readership.

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