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BOOK NOTES

Carruthers, Peter, *The Architecture of the Mind: Massive Modularity and the Flexibility of Thought*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006, pp. xviii + 462, £55.00 (cloth), £25.00 (paper).

This is an impressive attempt to defend the massive modularity of mind. Forceful arguments for massive modularity are given in chapters one and two. First we are given *a priori* accounts of what a module can and cannot be. Carruthers rejects Fodor-style modularity as implausible, particularly on the grounds of encapsulation. He establishes a very much weaker notion of module. Next come three arguments that assert that minds must consist of very many such modules. The argument from design notes that most evolutionary systems are modular. The argument from tractability contests that our minds must be modular to avoid computational explosion. And finally, the argument from animals suggests that if animal minds are modular then human minds will be too, owing to conservative evolutionary processes. Chapter two then defends the claim that animal minds are indeed modular, focusing on empirical data regarding insect and primate cognition. There is an interesting claim here that even association learning results from a specialized rate-estimation module.

The remainder of the book replies to objections of the 'how possibly?' sort. Carruthers describes how a massively modular mind might accommodate human creativity and our distinctively human scientific reason. This is perhaps the most interesting part of the book as we are led through a series of box and arrow accounts of the likely nature of cognition. However, in many instances these accounts, though convincing, do not depend on a massive modularity thesis. This is important, because lingering doubts about the defence of massive modularity remain even after the early chapters. For example, in defending computation as necessary for cognition, we are offered two alternatives, a language of thought, or classical distributed connectionism. These may not exhaust potential architectures.

In articulating his defence, Carruthers has produced an immense resource for those studying cognition. Empirical surveys range over topics as disparate as insect cognition, human psychology and primate neuroanatomy. The data are thorough and the commentary nuanced. There are also original and interesting accounts of cognitive faculties, but such accounts seem consistent with hierarchically arranged, feedback-rich, amodular (except in the weakest possible sense), memory and prediction systems. Carruthers remains defiant, however, and says that anyone who thinks such a single learning mechanism can perform what his array of modules can,

'is hereby challenged to build one' [99]. As always I'm left anticipating innovations in neuroanatomically inspired artificial intelligence systems.

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McKeever, Sean and Michael Ridge, *Principled Ethics: Generalism as a Regulative Ideal*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006, pp. viii + 242, £50 (cloth).

This book aims to defend moral generalism as a regulative ideal, arguing that morality can be codified into a finite and manageable set of moral principles. Although the idea of moral generalism is not new and has always served as a fundamental assumption of traditional moral theorists, it has not yet received systematic defence. Such a defence, as the authors correctly point out, is long overdue in the face of the challenges presented by moral particularists. The authors have done a good job in filling this void by both deflecting attacks from particularists and making a positive case for generalism.

This book has two parts. In Part I (consisting of Chapters 1–5), the authors aim to defend generalism from the particularists' attacks. Chapter 1 sets out a taxonomy of many types of moral particularisms. Chapter 2 argues that holism about reasons, being compatible with traditional moral theories such as utilitarianism, cannot provide the kind of support needed by the particularists. Chapter 3 discusses the notion of a default reason, contending that the particularists have trouble providing a satisfactory account of how some reasons—such as that an action would cause pain—can have a negative valency by default. Chapter 4 argues that the fact that moral vision is indispensable in reaching the correct moral verdict is neither incompatible with the existence of moral principles nor with thinking of them as useful in the decision-making process; the appeal to moral vision therefore fails to provide support for particularism. Chapter 5 is meant to be a transition to Part II (Chapters 6–9). It contends that constitutive generalism, the claim that certain moral principles linking the descriptive to the moral are constitutive of moral judgment, is vulnerable to a Moorean Open Question Argument and thus fails to pose a serious threat to particularism. Hence, this motivates the exploration of a new form of generalism in the following chapters.

In Part II, the authors aim to make a strong case for generalism as a regulative ideal. Chapter 6 argues that the very possibility of moral knowledge in particular cases can warrant the existence of default moral principles, thus falsifying many types of particularisms that hold the contrary view. Chapter 7 argues that, in the authors' own words, 'If practical wisdom is possible then morality can be captured in a finite set of unhedged principles with purely descriptive antecedents' [140]. Chapter 8 emphasizes the value of articulating moral principles, arguing that doing so plays an important role in our moral practices. Chapter 9 completes the

defence of generalism as a regulative ideal by vindicating the action-guiding roles of moral principles.

Overall, this book delivers what it promises by providing a systematic defence of moral generalism. It is done with great care and precision, it is lucid in writing and well-balanced in structure. I highly recommend it to anyone who is interested in the contemporary debate between moral particularists and moral generalists. My only reservation is that despite the authors' repeated emphasis on the importance of articulating moral principles, the book is lacking in information on the content of the finite and manageable set of moral principles the authors constantly mention. However, I do not think this is a serious flaw as anyone wishing to articulate the substantive content of moral principles must get their hands dirty in the muddy debates amongst normative ethical theorists. This task, I suspect, will take another book to accomplish.

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Raphael, D. D., *The Impartial Spectator: Adam Smith's Moral Philosophy*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007, pp. 143, £22.50 (cloth).

This is a scholarly and generally convincing interpretation of Adam Smith's *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, which first appeared in 1759 and was revised several times over the course of Smith's life. While most of these revisions were relatively minor, the sixth and final edition contained an entirely new and lengthy part called 'Of the Character of Virtue'.

Raphael demonstrates that many commentators have been led astray by a simple failure to notice which edition particular passages were written for. For example, the popular idea that *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* represents the views of an idealistic young man, whereas *The Wealth of Nations* represents the views of a more cynical older man, is shown to be mistaken, because some of the most 'idealistic' passages appear only in the sixth edition, which was written after *The Wealth of Nations*.

Raphael effectively argues that Smith's ethical theory is consistent with his economic theory. But mere consistency does not seem enough. It is a shame that Raphael does not explore ways in Smith's ethical theory might actually complement his economic theory.

Smith divided moral philosophy into two topics, the nature of virtue and the nature of moral judgement. But in the earlier editions of *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* he had relatively little to say about the former. The new part of the sixth edition partially redressed this imbalance. Raphael says [65] that Smith 'realised that he had omitted to carry out the whole of his stated programme', but he doesn't attempt to explain why Smith thought it was important to do this at this stage of his life. It is plausible that the new part, which is about not only the character of virtue but also ways of promoting virtue through education and other social practices, is related to Smith's observations in *The Wealth of Nations* about the dangers of unfettered

market forces. In *The Wealth of Nations*, Smith had argued that the state has an important cultural purpose, which includes the provision of education. The promotion of virtue is one public good that is not secured by the hidden hand alone.

Nonetheless Raphael accomplishes the main tasks he sets himself, explaining Smith's theory of moral judgement in which the conscience is imagined as an 'impartial spectator' on the agent's own actions, illuminating the historical context of Smith's moral theory (especially its place in the Scottish Enlightenment), and arguing for its continuing relevance. This book is highly recommended, not only for its contribution to the history of ideas, but also for its contribution to moral philosophy.

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