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Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society

Title

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Journal

Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society, 41(0)

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Publication Date

2019

Peer reviewed

The Modularity of the Motor System

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Abstract

The extent to which the mind is modular is a foundational concern in cognitive science. Much of this debate has centered on the question of the degree to which input systems, i.e., sensory systems such as vision, are modular (see, e.g., Fodor 1983; Pylyshyn 1999; MacPherson 2012; Firestone & Scholl 201; Burnston 2017; Mandelbaum 2017). By contrast, researchers have paid far less attention to the question of the extent to which our main output system, i.e., the motor system, qualifies as such. I will argue that the motor system should be construed as quasi-modular, at best, in that it is informationally encapsulated only to a certain degree, and in a way that can be strategically modulated by the agent. I will explore the implications of this result for nearby philosophical puzzles relating to different aspects of action control.