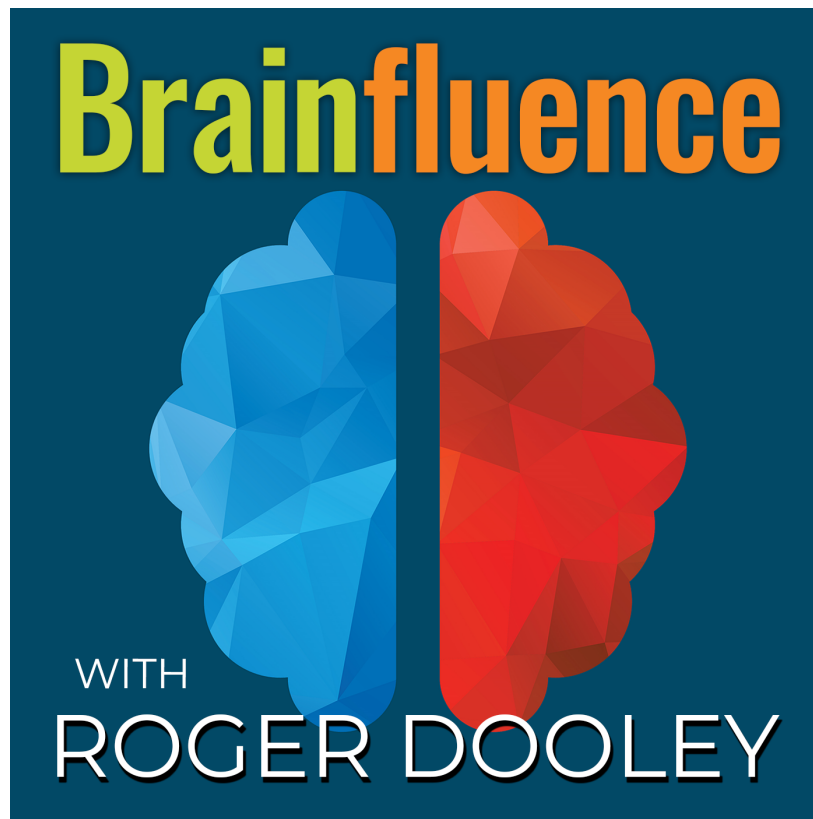


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Roger Dooley

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Welcome to Brainfluence, where author and international keynote speaker Roger Dooley has weekly conversations with thought leaders and world class experts. Every episode shows you how to improve your business with advice based on science or data.

Roger's new book, *Friction*, is published by McGraw Hill and is now available at Amazon, Barnes & Noble, and bookstores everywhere. Dr Robert Cialdini described the book as, "Blinding insight," and Nobel winner Dr. Richard Clamer said, "Reading Friction will arm any manager with a mental can of WD40."

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Now, here's Roger.

Roger Dooley: Welcome to Brainfluence. I'm Roger Dooley.

Joining me today is Dr. Gad Saad. He's Professor of Marketing at the John Molson School of Business at Concordia University, where he held the research chair in evolutionary behavioral sciences and Darwinian consumption from 2008 to 2018. He's a pioneer in the application of evolutionary psychology to consumer behavior, a topic of interest to many of us here, and is the author of *The Evolutionary Basis of Consumption* and *The Consuming Instinct*. He writes online in *Psychology Today*, and his new book is *The Parasitic Mind: How Infectious Ideas are Killing Common Sense*. Welcome to the show, Gad.

Gad Saad: So good to be with you. Thank you for having me.

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Roger Dooley: Great. Most of our listeners probably have some idea of what evolutionary psychology is, or evolutionary behavioral science. Can you briefly explain what that topic is about and why it's important?

Gad Saad: Sure. Evolutionary psychology is basically the application of evolutionary biology and evolutionary reasoning, so the study of the human mind. We can use evolutionary theory to study why our kidneys are formed the way that they are, or why we have opposable thumbs. But I think for most social scientists, it is difficult for them to accept that the most important organ in our body, which is our brain, is also under the influence of evolution. Many social scientists think that evolution stops at the neck. Sure, you can use evolutionary theory to explain why my femur is the way that it is or my pancreas, but don't you dare say that evolution has anything to do with the human mind.

What I did in founding the field of evolutionary consumption is I took evolutionary biology and I said, "We can't study consumer behavior without understanding the biological roots of what makes us be the consumers that we are." And I define, by the way, consumption very broadly. It's not just consuming Coca-Cola and Starbucks, but we also consume friendships, we consume religious narratives, we consume experiences, we consume... Mate choice is a consumatory choice. I really put pretty much everything that's purposive under the umbrella of consumption.

Roger Dooley: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Yeah. I don't widely accept it. Are these ideas in the field of psychology? I know I've cited the work of Jeffrey Miller in the past, who I'm sure you're well familiar with. But it's funny. In this group of

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psychologists, it seems to be very well accepted, but you don't hear that much about it in the broader sweep of people writing psychology-based papers or behavioral science papers.

Gad Saad: Yeah. In answering your second question, I'll go back to your first question, where you asked evolutionary psychology and evolutionary behavioral science as well. Evolutionary behavioral science is actually a broader rubric, if you'd like. Evolutionary psychology is one evolutionary-based discipline amongst the evolutionary behavioral sciences.

Ethology is something that Konrad Lorenz and two of his colleagues won the Nobel Prize for back in the early '70s. In that case, that was also within evolutionary behavioral sciences. In their case, they were studying the evolutionary roots of instincts. For example, when a chicken or any bird hatches, the first animal that it sees moving, it associates as it being the parent, and that is known as imprinting. We can take away the momma chicken and put a Doberman Pinscher, and then the chick will think that the Doberman Pinscher is the mom. That would be one evolutionary-based field that preceded evolutionary psychology.

Behavioral ecology is another field within the evolutionary behavioral sciences, where you are trying to study how cross-cultural differences could be due to evolutionary-based thinking. For example, the fact that, in some cultures, we have more spices that we use in the cuisines, India has spicier foods than Sweden, that itself could be due to an evolutionary-based logic. There's Darwinian anthropology, which is also within the

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evolutionary behavioral sciences. There's been a long tradition of evolutionary-based fields leading to evolutionary psychology.

To answer now your second question, which is how accepted is it, it is increasingly accepted, but it remains quite controversial, but only because there is a large frequency of imbeciles. There's no reason why anything in evolutionary psychology should be controversial. There is no other alternative than the human mind has evolved through the exact same forces that have led to the evolution of every single other living organism on Earth. But because people are ideologically motivated, there is a very long queue of people who hate evolutionary psychology for all the wrong reasons. I suspect that, if you and I held this chat in 50 years, there would be many fewer detractors, because the beauty of science is that it is auto-corrective. That which is controversial today, tomorrow become normal science, as Thomas Kuhn said.

Roger Dooley: How much bad thinking is there in social sciences in general? I mean, we've gone through the replication crisis, where that cast doubt on many studies in the field and many leading scientists. Now, I think we've gotten past some of that, and saying, "Okay, well, some stuff couldn't replicate because it was just bad science. And other stuff didn't replicate because it was specific to a particular experimental condition, and when somebody tried to replicate it, they couldn't do it." And really, what that does is that just helps us understand that particular phenomenon. It doesn't necessarily mean that the first group was doing bad science; it just means that we're establishing some boundary conditions for that science. I mean, how would characterize the field as a whole, Gad?

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Gad Saad: It really depends. In some cases, there are whole disciplines within the social sciences and the humanities that are complete quackery. And in a sense, many of the idea pathogens that I describe in *The Parasitic Mind* are precisely manifestations on that kind of stupidity. Postmodernism and critical race theory and identity politics and cultural relativism and biophobia, the fear of biology, all of these things have found their way within the social sciences, and they are dreadful ideas, because they're actually anti-scientific.

If we exclude those for a second, you're exactly correct that the social sciences, even when they are pursuing, assiduously, the scientific method, will oftentimes fail, for example, the replication crisis. Oftentimes in the social sciences, as I explain in some of my previous books, we don't have an organizing framework that can result in what the natural sciences have, which is a term that was reintroduced into the lexicon by E. O. Wilson in the late 1990s. He wrote a book called *Consilience*. Consilience refers to unity of knowledge. Physics-

Roger Dooley: Yeah, that was a tough read.

Gad Saad: But a great book, right? It was very influential in my own thinking, because as I was trying to develop evolutionary consumer psychology, as I was trying to Darwinize the business school, I relied on the fact that the ultimate goal of that initiative is to create greater consilience. What happens in the social sciences is people come from completely different original starting points, which then results in bifurcations in the tree of knowledge, not allowing us to have a consilient tree of knowledge.

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I think the main problem with the social sciences is not that they are epistemologically any less scientific than the natural sciences. It's not as though a sociologist can't be as serious and as rigorous a scientist as a physicist. But a chemist, there are no chemists who believe in the periodic table and chemists who don't believe in the periodic table. They've resolved that problem. Whereas in the social sciences, we can't even agree whether the human mind is shaped by evolution or not, so you could imagine how all kinds of bifurcations in our knowledge can arise.

Roger Dooley: Mm-hmm (affirmative). That makes a lot of sense. One of the things that I... When I got your book, I had to dig into my own library, and I found a book from, I think it was 1996, Virus of the Mind by Richard Brodie. In fact, the subtitle has the word meme in it, and of course, today, nobody then knew what a meme was outside of a few very specific folks. Now, everybody knows what a meme is, although it's not exactly the same definition today. It has nothing to do with cat videos or pictures of Trump or whatever. I'm curious, this has been evolving. Sorry about that. I made a bad choice of words. Tell me how your thinking has evolved over the years, Gad.

Gad Saad: Yeah. To specifically talk about memetic theory and so on, memetic theory is actually one of those fields that is subsumed within the evolutionary behavioral sciences. I discuss this in my first book, The Evolutionary Basis of Consumption. As some of your listeners and viewers may know, the concept of a meme was really popularized by Richard Dawkins in 1976, so now more than 40 years ago, in his book The Selfish Gene, where he argued that the analog to a gene... Genes can propagate, but we're also cultural animals. We're not only biological animals.

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What is the mechanism of propagation when we are trying to spread beliefs or ideas or jingles? Well, he took the term meme as the cultural analog to the gene.

Then that spawned several decades of work on memetic theory, and frankly, it's been kind of disappointing. Susan Blackmore was someone who wrote about memes. She was a memeticist. This book that you refer to also talks about memes. Daniel Dennett, the very famous philosopher, talked about, for example, religion being viruses of the human mind, and a memeplex. A memeplex is a collection of memes put together into a coherent... Some say coherent, others would say not coherent, if you're talking about religion. But putting them together in an organized framework. In the same way that you have a cineplex, a cineplex is a collection of cinemas, movie theaters, a memeplex is a collection of memes. Islam is a memeplex, Judaism is a memeplex, and then it gets spread through different brains. And now, if you think that that's a bad idea to spread, it becomes a virus.

In my case, I'm creating a bit... Well, not a bit. I'm saying something quite different. Yes, these ideas are spreading from brain to brain, but I'm calling them parasitic, so I'm coming from a... And that's why I call them idea pathogens, because a meme could be positive, it could be neutral, it could be negative. If I start singing a jingle and you overhear it, then I might infect your brain with my jingle, but it's harmless. Whereas a parasitic idea, here I go to the field of neuro-parasitology. Maybe if you give me permission, I can explain what that is, because it serves as the background to the book.

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As an evolutionary psychologist, one of the things that we do is we look at other species to then draw comparisons with humans, and this is the field called comparative psychology. I've always had the reflex to look... For example, if I'm studying toy preferences or writing about toy preferences, I will look at studies that have looked at toy preferences in rhesus monkeys and vervet monkeys and chimpanzees to show that they actually exhibit the same type of sex specificity of toy preferences as human infants do.

Because of that ability to look at other animals and draw conclusions with humans... By the way, this is called the study of homologies and analogies when you're comparing across species. As I was thinking about all of these dreadful ideas that I've been seeing in universities for the past 26-plus years that I've been as a professor, I started thinking, "Well, what would be the field for other animals that captures these kinds of parasitic ideas?" And of course, I fell on the field of parasitology, which is the study of how parasites can infect a host.

But neuro-parasitology is a specific sub-branch, which is the field of parasitology that looks at when a parasite seeks to find the host's brain, and then it rewires its behavior to its advantage, but to the detriment of the host. The classic example would be *Toxoplasma gondii*, which is a parasite that can infect the brains of mice, causing the mice to lose their innate fear of cats and actually become sexually attracted to the cats' urine, which is not really a good preference for a mouse to hold. I said, "Aha!" I had found, if you like, my framework for how to analogize actual brain worms, actual brain parasites through these dreadful, bad, parasitic ideas.

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What I do in the book is I trace where these bad ideas originate from. They all come from the university ecosystem, because it takes intellectuals to come up with really dumb ideas. And then I offer, towards the end of the book, inoculation, a vaccine, just like we're trying to find a solution to current COVID crisis by creating a vaccine. Well, can we come up with a set of decision-making rules, epistemological rules that could help us protect ourselves from these dreadful ideas? That gives you a big overview of the book.

Roger Dooley: One distinction you make really early on in the book, Gad, is the difference between emotional and rational thinking. You bring out Kahneman system one and system two. I often use conscious and non-conscious decision-making. I use that as an overall shorthand, even though obviously, there are various subcategories in there. And I was really amused, because yesterday, I was doing a virtual keynote. Haven't done a real one in person in a while. And I talked about fragrance marketers and how you will never see a fragrance marketer doing some kind of comparison study of their product with someone else's fragrance, or providing facts and figures. And I'm reading your book, and I found the exact same example in there, so that really made me chuckle.

One point you made, too, is that our problems as humans start to arise when we use the wrong type of thinking for a particular issue. Explain that paradigm. Obviously, we all think emotionally, we think rationally. And certain decisions, obviously, if you're buying a piece of technical gear, you'd probably better have your rational hat on for that one. You want to buy the one that looks best. But explain how this works and how it changes our behavior.

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Gad Saad: Sure. There's a term that I introduce very early in the chapter, which I refer to as epistemological dichotomania, which basically refers to the human penchant, and certainly within academia, to create two systems that you pit against each other. It's nature or nurture. Of course, that's a wrong dichotomy, because nurture doesn't exist outside of nature. The forms that nurture takes is usually because of nature.

I start with that example because I want to provide the theoretical ground for then saying it is wrong to say there is emotional processing and rational processing. We're either thinking animals or we are feeling animals. Of course, as you correctly said, we are both. The problem arises when we activate the wrong system at the wrong time. The example that I give in the book is where, if I'm going down a shortcut to get home and I'm taking an alley and I see four young men loitering and I get an activated fear response, my heart starts racing, I start perspiring, that fear response, which is based on an emotional system, is perfectly adapted from an evolutionary perspective. It makes sense that, in that context, I didn't engage in cognitive reasoning. But if I'm trying to solve a calculus problem, all of the emotional triggering in the world is not going to solve the calculus problem. The problem arises when we apply the wrong system at the wrong time.

The reason why I set all that up is because then I argue that, for many purposive and important decisions that we make, like choosing a political candidate for president, we should be activating our cognitive system a lot more than we end up doing, and we end up using most of our decisions based on the affective system. "I hate Trump.

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He disgusts me. He's repulsive." All of these things that I just said are all emotional responses. If I were to then challenge you and say, "But give me some cognitive justifications for why you hate Trump," many people, including my highfalutin, elitist, ivory tower-dwelling colleagues, won't be able to enunciate a cognitive reason. "He's disgusting, he's an ogre, he's vile." He's what I call a visceral aesthetic injury. No. For many issues, you need to engage your cognitive system.

One of my very good friends, I won't mention him, but many of your listeners might know him, is an incredibly reasoned intellectual, but who suffers from a dreadful case of Trump derangement syndrome. Literally every single day on his Twitter feed, "Today is the day that the prediction that he is an existential threat is going to come through." And then today passes and it doesn't happen, "No, I mean today it will be the day." And the next day, it's, "Today is the day." You end up being a doomsday prophet. How could it be that such a rational person, who is otherwise a very measured intellectual, can succumb to such hysteria? Well, that's because it's only driven by his affective system. Does that make sense?

Roger Dooley: Yeah, it does. And actually, I think I'm seeing a little bit of that, too, in relation to the COVID messaging that you see, and the opinions people have about what's going on. It's amazing how many narratives there are that aren't based in statistics. They're just based on some kind of emotional reaction to things. I've had people who I consider to be intelligent, logical business people who clearly could not be in business for years successfully if they were irrational. A business is rather Darwinian, I find, and you can only take it for so long. By the way, some of

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the more strange opinions on this topic that don't necessarily comport with at least what I see is reality from these statistics. I definitely see how that can happen.

I think one example you have in the book, too, involving Trump is the... What was the top emotional reaction that some people had to his election? I think it's normal to be disappointed if your candidate does not win a presidential election. It's probably normal to be concerned if you feel that they will be making some bad decision that could affect you or affect the country. But it seemed that this particular election produced a far more emotional reaction than anyone I can remember, where we had people who were on the floor sobbing. That, I didn't quite understand.

Gad Saad:

You have a Nobel Prize winner, Paul Krugman, in economics stating that... I mean, the economy is going to be nonexistent. And I'm being a bit facetious here and being hyperbolic to paraphrase what he said, but basically, we're going to go back to the Stone Age with bartering because Trump is going to destroy the economy. We're going to be using smoke signals and homing pigeons because he's going to destroy the economy. He's going to bring about a nuclear holocaust, he's going to end democracy, martial law is going to be instituted. That is such a vulgar instantiation of supposed reasoning. I mean, as you said, hate the guy, think he is grotesque. The sun is going to rise tomorrow. And guess what? Whether Trump is in office for four years or eight years, you'll get through this, and life will go on. He'll be nothing but a little blip. But it's exactly what we've been talking about.

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Because, in this case, Trump is such a... I mean, Trump basically is a rejection of all of the mechanisms by which the intelligentsia has defined itself. That's why they can't stand him. That's why I say he's an aesthetic injury. "If someone like him, who speaks with the bragging and the obnoxiousness and the narcissism and the grandiosity that he speaks, if he can become President of the United States, then why did I go and get my women's studies degree at Brown so I could sip with my pinky up? It invalidates my personhood." It's a form of ego-defensiveness. "If he could make it, it invalidates my existence. He can't have ascended to this position." It's really grotesque. In a sense, maybe it's a bit of a form of schadenfreude, because I am in Canada, but I'm kind of hoping that Trump wins again so that I could sit back with a nice cognac and watch the morons and imbeciles go hysteric for another four years.

Roger Dooley: Right. Well, we'll see, because this will actually... We're recording this about five days or something, four days before the election. It will air, I think, about a week and a half after the day of the election, although who knows if we'll even have a decision by then? With so many states experiencing massive mail-order ballots, and some don't even begin opening those envelopes until Election Day, it will be potentially a crazy day, week, month. I hope not. You talk about idea pathogens, Gad, as liberating people from the shackles of reality. What do you mean by liberating people from the shackles of reality?

Gad Saad: Yeah, thank you for asking this. As I was looking at each of those dreadful parasitic ideas, I said, "What do they have in common?" If you think about, say, cancer, there are many different forms of cancers. There's pancreatic

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cancer and testicular cancer and leukemia and so on. But one thing that they have in common is that they are all the unchecked cell division. We could at least say that, irrespective of which cancer we're talking about, there's at least the... My brain, the way it works, it's synthetic. It looks for consilience. What is common across all of these cancers? How can we unify the social sciences under an evolutionary framework?

This is how I came up with this idea of idea pathogens as freedom from reality. I was saying, "All of these ideas are dreadful in their own unique way, but what do they have in common?" That's how I got the insight of... Well, they all share an equal commitment to freeing the believer in that parasitic idea from the shackles of reality. What do I mean by that?

Take, for example, social constructivism. Social constructivism is the idea that everything is due to a social construction. We are born empty slate with equal potentiality, and then it's only the vagaries of socialization that result in me becoming Lionel Messi, the famous soccer player, and you becoming the great diplomat, and him becoming Pablo Picasso. It's only socialization that led to that.

Well, that's a great message. It's a hopeful message, because it says, "Hey, maybe my kid could be the next Michael Jordan. There is no starting genetic point that would make my kid less likely to be Albert Einstein or Michael Jordan." Well, that's very freeing, right? It frees me from the shackles of reality, and in this case, something called genetic differences, biological-based

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differences. But it's also pure bullshit, if you forgive the term.

Postmodernism frees me from the shackles of universal truths, because what does postmodernism say? There are no objective truths. Everything is shackled by the constraints of our subjectivity, of our personal biases. Transgenderism frees me from the biological reality of my genitalia. Each of these idea pathogens is a way for me to free myself from this really pesky thing called reality. Well, it's very liberating, but it's also false.

When I say false, I don't mean to imply that transgender people don't really exist. I don't mean to imply that transgender people don't have the right to live with full dignity and free of bigotry. But I do mean that, in the pursuit of that laudable goal, we don't murder truth. We don't at the same time say, "If you're a 6'7" biological male, 285 pounds, who yesterday was called Joe, but today you come out as self-identifying as woman, now because you are a trans woman, you could compete in sports with biological females. And anybody who disagrees with that must be a transphobic Nazi." This is the problem with these parasitic ideas. They all start with a kernel of truth, with a noble goal, but then they end up freeing us from the shackles of reality.

Roger Dooley: You circle back to the business, so I'm curious. In evolutionary psychology or perhaps evolutionary behavioral science, I'm curious, how many of our cognitive biases... I mean, now if you go to a list of cognitive biases, whether it's confirmation bias or endowment effect or all these things, you will find dozens or even 100-plus, depending on how finely you slice

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them. I'm curious, do most of those, or any of those, have roots in our DNA and evolution?

Gad Saad: Fantastic question, and it's actually... It's the way by which I move from behavioral decision theory to evolutionary psychology. My training was very much rooted in the Tversky and Kahneman, the cognitive biases paradigm. But then I became very disenchanted with what, facetiously, I would call the violation of the month club paradigm, which every month, some very clever psychologist would come up with some new experimental design to demonstrate that the actions of rational choice, as postulated by classical economic theory, are wrong. And I'm not denigrating at all Kahneman and Tversky. As a matter of fact, they're good friends of my former doctoral supervisor, who himself is a very noted behavioral decision theorist and cognitive psychologist, J. Edward Russo. And one of my professors is Rick Thaler, who won the Nobel Prize recently. I'm very well steeped-

Roger Dooley: I know, he actually is an endorser on my Friction book, so I was very proud of that.

Gad Saad: Oh, that's wonderful! Congrats. I'm very well steeped within that behavioral decision-making paradigm, but what I've always thought was lacking is exactly the question that you posed, which is... Okay, so we've spent 40-plus years demonstrating that this mythical species called homo economicus doesn't exist. But that's kind of silly, right? We know that the model of decision-making, as postulated by classical economists, is just a stylized, normative model of decision-making. This would be like a physiologist spending 40 years to demonstrate that the

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pancreas of humans is not like the pancreas of the mythical unicorn. Well, the mythical unicorn doesn't exist, so why are we spending so much time shooting down that mythical unicorn that doesn't exist?

A lot more interesting is to ask the question that you said. To the extent that we exhibit these cognitive biases, what would be the evolutionary reason for us to have evolved that cognitive architecture? And I'm here to tell you that very few people have tackled that question. One, within that group of cadre that has done that, is Gerd Gigerenzer and his colleagues. Are you familiar with Gerd?

Roger Dooley: I'm not, but I will try and get familiar with him. It sounds interesting.

Gad Saad: Yeah. Gerd Gigerenzer is a German psychologist. And actually, his group had invited me back in 2001 to the Max Planck Institute in Germany. And what they have tried to do is look at many of these cognitive biases via an evolutionary lens. For example, they developed the idea of fast and frugal heuristics. It makes evolutionary sense for us to evolve fast and frugal heuristics. And then they give an example of this in a business context, as many of your listeners are business folks. If you take for example something known as the recognition heuristic, which is a fast and frugal heuristic, it is easily deployed, quickly deployed, and it requires very little cognitive cost. Well, we often choose things simply using the cue of, "If I recognize it, I choose it."

Let's take in a specific business context. I could show you a bunch of companies and ask you, "Which ones should I invest in for maximal return?" And I could use a very

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fancy mathematical model with PhDs in physics and mathematics and econometrics, or I could use the following fast and frugal heuristic: Go down the list of all these companies and only invest in the companies that you recognize. I mean, that's a lot less fancy than using Brownian motion to model maximal stock return. "Ford I recognize, GenTech I don't. Apple I recognize." And it ends up that that recognition heuristic does perform very well.

If memory serves me well, the gentleman who did this research within the Gigerenzer group is Daniel Goldstein. Here's an example where you're looking at how the architecture of our thinking would have evolved to deploy these fast and frugal heuristics, and it makes perfect evolutionary sense for our brain to have evolved that way. To answer your question in this very long-winded way, if some of your viewers are interested in this stuff, I see the next frontier as being exactly your question, which is applying an evolutionary lens to understanding these cognitive biases.

Roger Dooley: Mm-hmm (affirmative). I'm looking forward to that, because to me, it's been a neglected area. You can certainly come up with easy mental models of why we behave in a certain way and why that would've made sense in our hunter-gatherer days, and it's influencing us now. I haven't seen that much formal research. That should be interesting.

Let me ask you about something else, kind of along the same lines. Kahneman said there is a law of least effort for cognitive and physical effort, and people have been talking about law of least effort for years. It's not really an

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established scientific principle like the law of gravity or something, but do you think that that exists?

To me, when Dan Ariely found that the word free was really powerful to people, beyond whatever monetary value. If somebody was giving you something for free or for a penny, the amount of money may be inconsequential, but the effect on people's behavior is greatly different. I have visions of this low-hanging fruit in our days when we were evolving that, even if you don't need something, if there's no effort to get it, then you'll probably grab it. I'm curious whether you have any opinions on that.

Gad Saad: You're asking me to comment about a law of least cognitive effort?

Roger Dooley: Yeah, right. I mean, that's kind of what... When you were talking about Thaler, that's sort of what got him his Prize, was saying, "Well, if you make things really easy for people, they'll do it more."

Gad Saad: Let me give you an example of that in answering your question, which then I can relate back to our earlier conversation about Trump. There are many decision rules that we can deploy when making a decision. The classic economic normative model would say that, if I'm choosing between two products, both products are defined by a bunch of attributes, I will look at all of the attribute values of the two products, and I would weigh them by the importance of each attribute, and arriving at a final overall choice. Car A is better than car B, because I looked at all of the attribute values, I compared them, I multiplied them by the attribute weight, and arriving at... And the reason

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why that's called a normative rule is because that's what you ought to do if you're trying to maximize utility. You look at all of the possible information.

But the reality is that people don't do that. When I'm choosing toothpaste, I don't sit there and engage in an incredibly computationally costly process like the one I just described. Rather, I use, to use your term, a law of... What'd you call it? Low effort?

Roger Dooley: Least effort. Yeah, a law of least effort. Basically, the people will choose the easier path when one is available.

Gad Saad: Right. There's a whole field within behavioral decision-making that looks at... And the guys who really developed this, there's a great book called *The Adaptive Decision Maker* by Payne, Bettman, and Johnson. And actually, Johnson was also a former doctoral student of... My doctoral supervisor was also his supervisor. For those of you who are interested, it's called *The Adaptive Decision Maker*. What they did basically is they mapped a whole bunch of decision rules that we use that are not nearly as effortful as what the normative rule should be.

Here's one, for example. This one was originally uncovered by Amos Tversky. The lexicographic rule, this is really least effort, would be, "I don't look at all of the attributes values. I simply look at my most important attribute, and I choose the alternative that scores the highest on that most important attribute." For example, if I'm choosing between two cars, if price is the most important attribute for me, I will choose the car that costs less, and I'm done.

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Now, let's apply this to, say, Trump versus Clinton, last election. And I use that model to explain how perfectly rational people could have chosen Trump. It might be the case that, had people looked at all of the information, they would've chosen Hillary Clinton. Maybe yes, maybe no. But let's suppose I use the lexicographic rule in making the choice between Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton, and let's suppose my most important attribute is authenticity, or immigration policy. If I believe, rightly or wrongly, that Trump scores better on that attribute, that's it. I stop and choose Trump. This is exactly speaking to your least effort thing, because I only looked at one attribute, my most important attribute, in making a choice. I didn't look at 50 attributes. Yes, there's a whole field within behavioral decision-making that is very much founded on the principle that we use these mental shortcuts in making decisions.

Roger Dooley: Yeah, it's kind of funny that you mentioned immigration. Back in summer of 2016, before the election, I did not call 2016 election for Trump. I've had Scott Adams on this show, who analyzed the messaging and actually did predict that Trump would win. I did not predict that. But I did compare the messaging of Trump and Hillary Clinton on immigration, and Hillary Clinton had a nine-point plan, these complicated programs. "This program, we're going to change in this way," all these acronyms for programs that I'm sure nobody outside of the beltway would have any clues to what those acronyms meant, and it was very complex messaging. Where Trump said, "I'll build a wall," and then people pressed him for specifics, "It's a big wall, a beautiful wall."

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And to me, that was very much system-one messaging for Trump and system-two messaging for Clinton. And trying to understand what Clinton was going to do would take a lot of effort, where Trump's idea, whether or not it was a good idea or a bad idea, that didn't matter. It was a simple idea that your brain could process without any cognitive effort at all. We could envision, in our mind, a giant wall. Now, maybe you would envision that as being a bad thing, maybe you'd envision as being a good thing, but you did not have to think about it to understand it.

And I think that, by simplifying, and perhaps oversimplifying, in many cases, issues, Trump was able to communicate in a very different way than Clinton was. Clinton, being a policy lunk, who really deeply understood many of these issues, but could not necessarily communicate that in a way that would resonate with voters who did not have her level of understanding.

Gad Saad: And that speaks, by the way, to... I wrote an article, I can't remember now, maybe two, three years ago, on my Psychology Today column. It was titled: Marketing is Life and Life is Marketing. And one of the ideas that I have for a future book is to really expand this idea, because what I basically am arguing there is that everything in life is marketing. The example that you just gave is marketing. How do you sell an idea? Me being on your show right now, I'm marketing, of course, the book, but I'm marketing my ideas. Oftentimes, what you have is great scientists who are very, very good within their very narrow fields of specialization, but take them out of their lab, and they're buffoons. They're idiots. I mean, they literally cannot excite people about what they're doing.

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And I understand that not everybody has the same eloquence, not everybody has the same charismatic persona, not everybody can appear on Joe Rogan and excite 20 million fans. But in a sense, that's really a missed opportunity, because in today's world of these incredible platforms that we have to market ideas... I could spend my time writing a peer-reviewed article, which of course, I love doing and will hopefully forevermore do, because it's part of my job as a professor, but if a paper gets cited 100 times 10 years after it's published, my god, that was a successful paper. 100 times. If I go on Joe Rogan, within a week, it's been downloaded 20 million times. Now, I'm not comparing these two things, but I'm saying, if I am someone who is in the business of creating knowledge and then, step two, disseminating knowledge, I should be using all these tools.

Everything in life is marketing. We market ourselves in the mating market, we market ourselves in the labor market, we market ourselves among different possible prospective groups of friendship market. When people don't understand marketing, they really think of marketing as a most basic thing. How does a restaurateur create a menu? How do you send out flyers to get people to come to your night club? Sure, that's marketing, but marketing, as a scientific discipline, is really everything.

Anthropology, economics, mathematical modeling, in my case biology and psychology, it all comes together in marketing. For anybody who's viewing out there, marketing is a very exciting thing to study.

Roger Dooley: I think that would probably be a good place to wrap up, Gad. Let me remind our listeners and viewers that we're

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speaking with Gad Saad, author of *The Parasitic Mind*, which I'm holding up here for those folks who can see it, a really fascinating book about infectious ideas and how to protect yourself against the wrong kind of infectious ideas. Again, how can our listeners and viewers find you if they want to connect with you?

Gad Saad: Yeah, thank you for asking. Certainly, you can follow me on Twitter, @Gad, G-A-D-S-A-A-D. I have a YouTube channel called The Saad Truth. S-A-A-D, after my name. I also have a podcast if you don't want to stream it on YouTube or you want to have it in your ears, also The Saad Truth with Dr. Saad. I have a public Facebook page. It's not difficult to find me. Get out there and make sure to get a copy of your book to protect yourself and your children from these parasitic ideas.

Roger Dooley: Well, that's great. We will link to all those places, to the book, and any other resources we spoke about on the show notes page, at rogerdooley.com/podcast. And we'll have text, audio, and video versions of this conversation there as well. Yeah, thanks so much for being on the show. It's been a fun one.

Gad Saad: Thank you so much, Roger. Great talking to you. Cheers.

Thank you for tuning into this episode of Brainfluence. To find more episodes like this one, and to access all of Roger's online writing and resources, the best starting point is RogerDooley.com.

And remember, Roger's new book, *Friction*, is now available at Amazon, Barnes and Noble, and book sellers everywhere. Bestselling author Dan Pink calls it, "An important read," and Wharton Professor Dr. Joana Berger said, "You'll understand Friction's power and how to harness it."

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