

# Book Reviews

Edited by Gregg R. Murray

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Gad Saad (Ed.), *Evolutionary Psychology in the Business Sciences* (New York: Springer-Verlag, 2012), 371 pages. ISBN 978-3540927839. Hardcover \$189.00.

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The term “Business Sciences” historically has been a misnomer, if not an oxymoron, as business schools have tended to take an applied approach to educating their students through a focus on proximate problems, methods, and results. This emphasis on pragmatism over theoretical synthesis and sophistication lends itself to “flavor of the month” trends and fads at the expense of in-depth studies searching for integrated insight into how and why *homo economicus* make their consumption and production decisions. Even when theory rears its head, much like a whack-a-mole, it is divorced from an over-arching framework and as a result is curiously flawed in understanding why humans do what they do. The field of economics, the flag bearer for theoretical approaches to business decision making (so much so, departments vacillate between belonging with their scientific brethren in colleges of liberal arts and sciences, or with the financially remunerative endeavors of business schools), has staunchly adhered to theoretical models that are dismal fictions of human behavior—specifically, that humans are strictly rational decision makers.

As pointed out by Monica Capra and Paul Rubin in their chapter in this edited volume, “economists had been heavily influenced by physics, which aims at finding unified theories for understanding the physical world” (p. 322). When advances have been made in the field of economics (and Nobel Prizes awarded), they

tend to occur when deviations from this rational choice model of individual decision-making are pointed out and modeled. While this does not deny the contributions rational choice theory has made to the understanding of consumption and business decisions, mainly at the aggregate level, the stubborn adherence to this theoretical model by fields contained within business schools, as well as proximate fields of inquiry such as public administration and political science, is dispiriting, especially when a more powerful, robust, and integrated option exists. Furthermore, it suggests a blind dedication to delusions about human behavior that at best is inefficient and at worst is harmful by prioritizing misanthropic behavior.

Into this void steps Gad Saad, Professor of Marketing and Concordia University Research Chair in Evolutionary Behavioral Sciences and Darwinian Consumption, with an edited volume consisting of 12 chapters on evolutionary psychology in the business sciences contributed by eminent scholars from around the globe. Saad, whose apostolic zeal for applying evolutionary psychology to the business sector is evidenced by a multitude of articles, TED talks, the books *The Consuming Instinct* and *The Evolutionary Bases of Consumption*, and a popular blog on the *Psychology Today* website (<http://blogs.psychologytoday.com/blog/homo-consumericus>), brings together 28 contributors representing a broad range of academic disciplines and problem sets. The high quality contributions highlight the unifying power evolutionary theory has in bringing together such diverse scholars and signify evolutionary theory’s ascendance both as a grand unifying theory of human behavior and as an eminently pragmatic approach to solving real-world problems faced by businesspersons across the world.

By understanding that human behavior as a production of selection based on problems posed in our distant evolutionary past—problems whose solutions helped humans survive, reproduce, and thrive—we are in a better position to appreciate how not all current behaviors are necessarily beneficial in the modern world. For instance, ultimate causation suggests that

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