

limitations and make more informed decisions. But the importance of evolution goes beyond psychology. It gives us a much deeper sense of our place in nature, showing us that we're not something apart from it or above other creatures. That view tempers our sense of exceptionalism, both humbling us and making human experience feel more precious, because we see that we're the outcome of an insanely long and incredible journey.

**One of the most fascinating themes explored in your audiobooks is evolutionary psychology. It certainly opened new ways of thinking for me. Could you explain a little about this branch of evolutionary science?**

Evolutionary psychology is essentially an attempt to answer a simple but profound question: Why does the human mind work the way it does today? Just as our bodies are the product of millions of years of evolution, so too are our brains and many of our psychological tendencies. Why, for example, are people generally more afraid of snakes and spiders than of cars or airplanes? Why are we so easily drawn to rumors, bad news or emotionally charged stories? Why do emotions such as jealousy and love, as well as cooperation, altruism and even tribalism, appear in virtually every culture? Evolutionary psychology seeks to explain these patterns not only through culture or upbringing, but through the evolutionary history of our species. One point cannot be stressed enough. Evolutionary psychology does not argue that every behavior with an evolutionary origin is somehow "right" or "morally justified". The fact that a particular trait may have helped our ancestors survive does not mean we should embrace it today. The discipline is fundamentally about explaining "why certain behaviors exist," not about excusing or endorsing them.

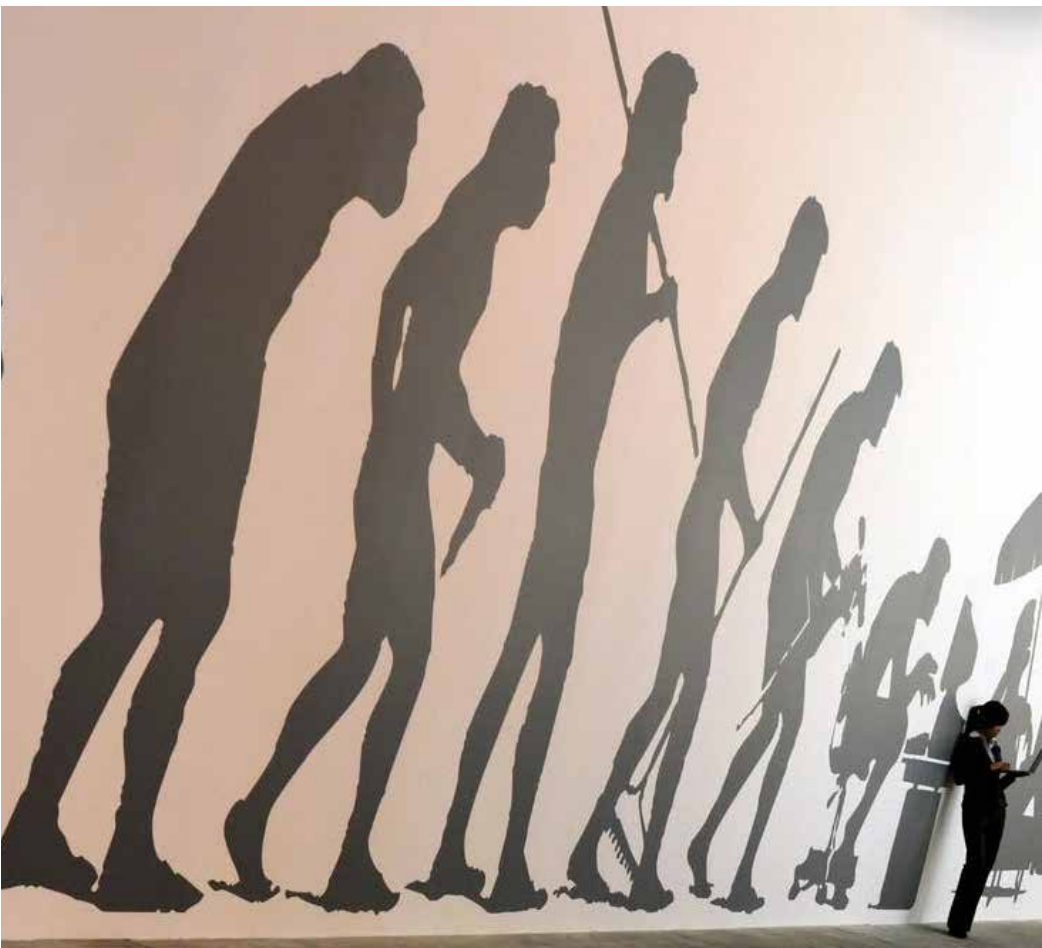
**Among all the scientific books you have narrated, why did you decide to record Mark Manson's bestselling "The Subtle Art of Not Giving a F\*ck," especially in a translation that so faithfully captures the book's brash, sometimes even rude tone?**

The truth is, I've never confined myself exclusively to science books. As I mentioned earlier, my main criterion is whether a book can genuinely change the way people think or encourage them to see the world differently. "The Subtle Art of Not Giving a F\*ck" draws heavily on psychological research as well as real-life experience, and what resonated with me was its central message: we simply cannot care deeply about everything, so we have to choose consciously where to give our attention and emotional energy. As for the language, I believe that if you're going to bring a book to an audience, you should remain as faithful as possible to its spirit, not just to its ideas. Manson deliberately writes in a sharp, witty, and sometimes even rude tone because he wants to jolt readers out of the clichés that dominate self-help books. Had that voice been toned down in translation or narration, a significant part of the book's personality would have been lost.

This approach isn't unprecedented either. Great figures such as Rumi occasionally employed equally bold and daring language when it served a literary purpose. The Persian translation by Ershad Nikkiah was exceptionally strong, so I found almost nothing that needed changing. However, that doesn't mean I believe this style of language belongs everywhere. Every book has its own voice and its own character, and this one demanded precisely that tone. One of my goals has always been to give listeners an experience that comes as close as possible to reading the original work.

**Many of the books you feature share a strong philosophical undercurrent, raising questions about meaning, free will and humanity's place in the universe. Having spent years narrating these works, do you think an evolutionary perspective answers the question of why we exist, or does it simply explain how we came to be?**

Science, and evolutionary theory in particular, is far better equipped to explain how life came about than why it exists. Science shows us how life emerged, how it became increasingly complex and how human beings evolved into what we are today. But questions such as "What is the ultimate purpose of life?" or "Is there any purpose at all?" belong to philosophy rather than science. People sometimes expect science to answer questions that lie outside its scope. It's rather like trying to weigh an object with a thermometer. The tool simply isn't designed for that task. In the same way, the scientific method cannot prove or disprove the existence of some overarching cosmic meaning. That doesn't mean science has nothing to contribute to our understanding of meaning. Quite the opposite. Learning about evolution, cosmology and the history of nature can profoundly reshape how we see ourselves. When we realize that every living creature on Earth is related to us, that every atom in our bodies was forged inside ancient stars, or that we inhabit an unimaginably vast universe, our perspective inevitably changes. Science may not hand us a ready-made answer to the meaning of life, but it helps us ask deeper, more honest questions. Personally, I don't believe meaning is something waiting out there to be discovered. I think it's something each of us creates consciously and responsibly through the way we choose to live. Science is an extraordinary



A woman stands in front of a wall depicting the contested narrative of the evolutionary theory in Hanover, Germany.  
● DAVID HECKER/AFP

tool for understanding reality, but the responsibility for creating meaning ultimately remains our own.

**Over the past eight years you have probably built a remarkably diverse audience, from eager university students to people encountering evolutionary thought for the first time and experiencing what might be called an "existential shock". What is the most memorable message you have ever received from a listener, and how did it reflect a change in the way that person saw the world?**

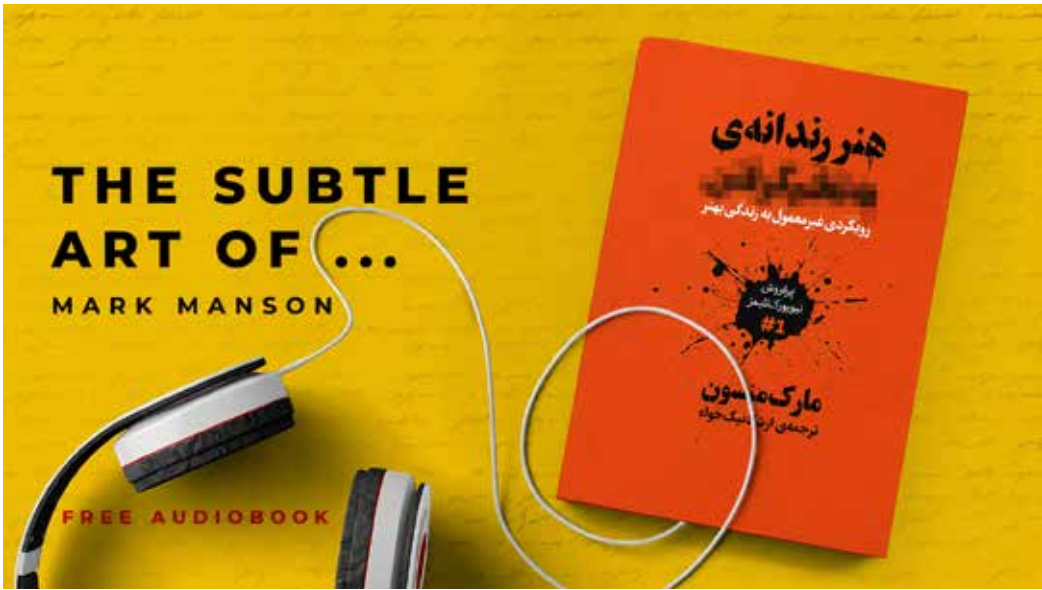
Honestly, this is the hardest question for me to answer. Over the years, I have received so many extraordinary and deeply gratifying messages that, more than once, I thought about publishing them all together. But then I realized they might mean very little to anyone other than me! So, let me just say this: I have told some of the people who sent them more than once that when I read a message like that, I feel that if I were to die right now, I would have done what I was meant to do in this world — and I would want for nothing more.

**Based on the feedback you have received, which audio-**

**book has had the greatest impact on your audience? What made it resonate so strongly?**

If I had to name just one, it would probably be "Sapiens" by Yuval Noah Harari, simply because that's where everything began. That said, I don't think Harari is an extraordinary scientist, nor do I consider Sapiens unparalleled on a global scale. His real gift is storytelling, and the human brain is wired to respond to a touching story. What makes the book powerful isn't that it delivers scientific facts. It reshapes the reader's mental framework. After reading or listening to it, you no longer look at history, money, nations, human rights, or even yourself in quite the same way. Harari invites readers to revisit some of their most deeply held assumptions, and for many people, that's a genuinely mind-blowing experience. The book also bridges disciplines, drawing together evolutionary biology, anthropology, economics, psychology and history into a single narrative. And that interdisciplinary approach makes you feel like you're not just memorizing a bunch of random facts, but putting together a much more coherent picture of humanity and the world. To me, a truly lasting book isn't one that simply adds to what we

The AI-generated image shows the cover of one of the translated books that Farhad Arkani decided to record an audiobook for.  
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know. It's one that changes how we see. For many people who follow my channel, Sapiens has done exactly that. The world is the same when they finish it, but they aren't.

**Suppose someone tells you, "I don't have time to read or listen to science books." What would you say to persuade them, without sounding preachy, to give it just one hour?**

The first thing I'd say is that I actually agree with them! Modern life is genuinely busy, and many people struggle to find time to sit down with a book. But if you look a little more closely, most of us have pockets of time that go unused: driving, walking, standing in line at the bank, doing household chores. Audiobooks are made for those moments.

I never ask people to change their habits overnight. I simply say, "Give it one hour." Choose a book, or even an episode of our "Banafsh" podcast, based on what genuinely sparks your curiosity, not what someone else tells you to listen to. If, after an hour, you feel that it has added nothing to your perspective, feel free to set it aside.

I've seen it happen countless times. People who start with that single hour often end up looking for the next book, and then the next.

The most valuable asset anyone can work on is updating their mental model of the world. We routinely update our phones, our cars and our softwares, yet many of us go years carrying around the same assumptions and outdated beliefs.

**As someone who has spent a lifetime reading and thinking about books, what do you believe it would take to encourage more people in Iran to read in an age dominated by social media, streaming platforms and endless digital entertainment? And beyond that, how do we steer readers toward books that genuinely change the way they think about life and the universe?**

I think the first step is to stop blaming people. It's easy to say, "People don't read anymore." It's much harder to ask whether we've made books engaging, accessible and relevant in today's world. We're competing with extraordinarily sophisticated rivals: social media, VOD platforms and video games, all designed with the help of psychologists, designers and increasingly intelligent algorithms to capture and hold our attention. Against that kind of competition, books can't rely solely on their traditional form. That's why I believe we need new ways of bringing books to people. Audiobooks, podcasts, thoughtful conversations about books, high-quality summaries and smart use of digital media can all serve as gateways to the original text. The goal isn't to replace books with social media. That isn't realistic. The goal is to use those same platforms to lead people back to books. More importantly, though, the real issue isn't how much people read. It's what they read and how they think. A society progresses not because its citizens become vacuum cleaners for information, but because they learn to think more clearly, ask better questions and become more willing to challenge their own beliefs.



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