

# Darwin, disaster, and prosociality

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# Plan of the talk

- Disaster politics
- Evolution of prosociality
- The question of pre-State war
- The Spinoza question

# Disaster politics

- False security fears (Haiti, Katrina)
- “Their own first responders”
- The state produces atomization; it doesn’t protect us from atomized violence
- Disasters reveal prosociality foreclosed by atomizing practices supported by the state.
- Securitization can produce the violence that retrospectively “justifies” it

# Evolution of prosociality

- Prosociality: helping / hurting in line w/ cognitive-emotionally invested social patterns
- Altruism: helping / hurting w/ a fitness cost
- Explaining away altruism
  - Kin selection
  - Mutualism
  - Direct and indirect reciprocity
- Sexual selection
- Social selection

# Prosocial understanding / emotions

- Emotional contagion
- Distress relief
- Sympathy
- Empathy
- Moral intuition
- Moral discussion

# The question of pre-State war

- Bowles and Gintis propose extensive pre-State war as necessary for evolution of prosociality
- Darwin and group selection
- Biology: are we killer apes?
- Archeology: is there physical evidence of extensive pre-State war?
- Ethnography: does social structure of nomadic forager bands support extensive war?

# The Spinoza question: why fight for your own servitude?

“Granted, then, that the supreme mystery of despotism, its prop and stay, is to keep men in a state of deception, and with the specious title of religion to cloak the fear by which they must be held in check, so that they will fight for their servitude as if for their salvation, and count it no shame, but the highest honour, to spend their blood and their lives for the glorification of one man.” (Spinoza, TTP, Preface)

## Richerson and Boyd:

### equality-preserving stacked levels

“Top-down control is generally exerted through a segmentary hierarchy that is adapted to preserve nearly egalitarian relationships at the face-to-face level...The trick is to construct a formal nested hierarchy of offices, using various mixtures of ascription and achievement to staff the offices.... Selfishness and nepotism [family emotions] ... degrade the effectiveness of social organizations.” (RB, 2005, 232-33)

# Deleuze and Guattari: direct investment in hierarchy

“Investments of an unconscious nature can ensure general submission to a dominant class by making cuts and segregations pass over into a social field, insofar as it is effectively invested by desire and no longer by interests. A form of social production and reproduction, along with its economic and financial mechanisms, its political formations ... can be desired as such, in whole or in part, independently of the interests of the desiring-subject.” (DG, AO, 103E)