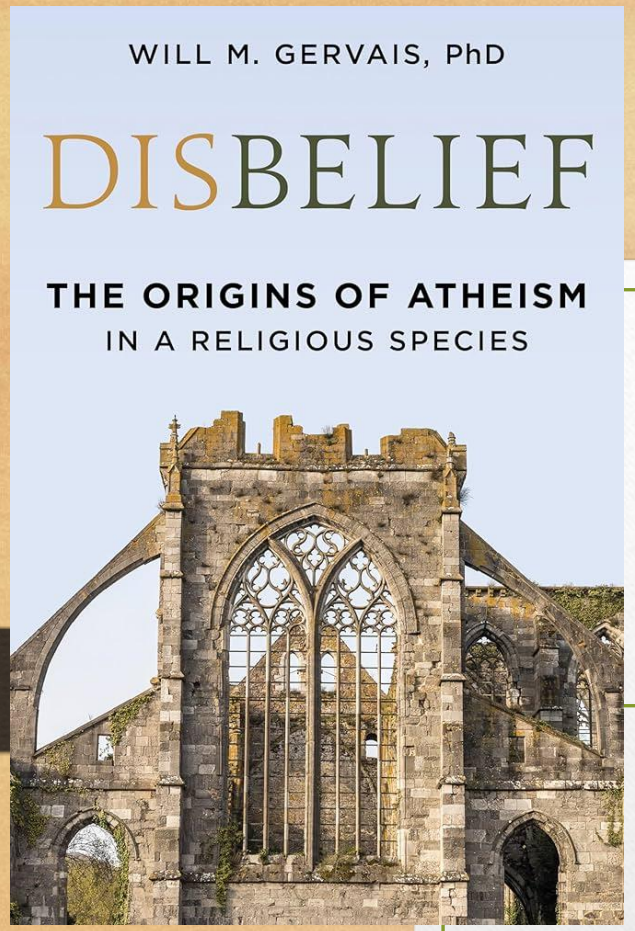


Scientific Study of Religion 7

Dr. Saeed Garmaroudi

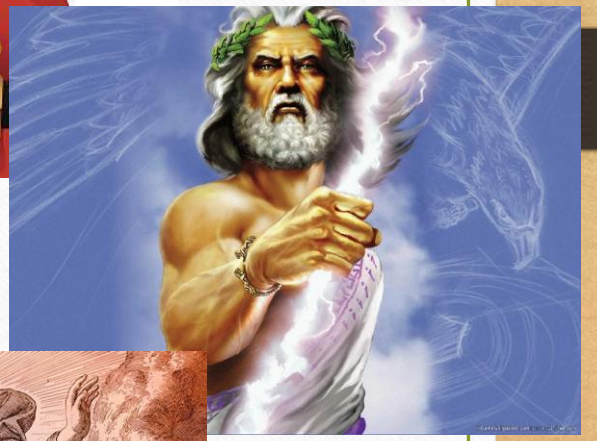




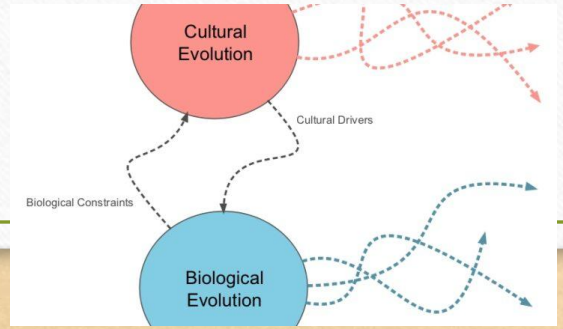
Previously discussed

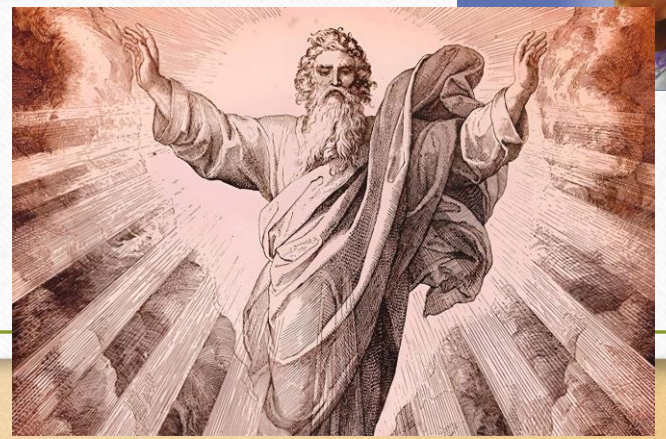






- Mickey Mouse, Santa Claus, Zeus, and Yahweh
- Is it all about content?
- Dual inheritance theory
  - Conformist transmission
  - Prestige-biased transmission
  - CREDs





Why do some religions persist?

- From an individual perspective to a collective one
- Why are a number of religions more successful?
- Cultural group selection and religious pro-sociality



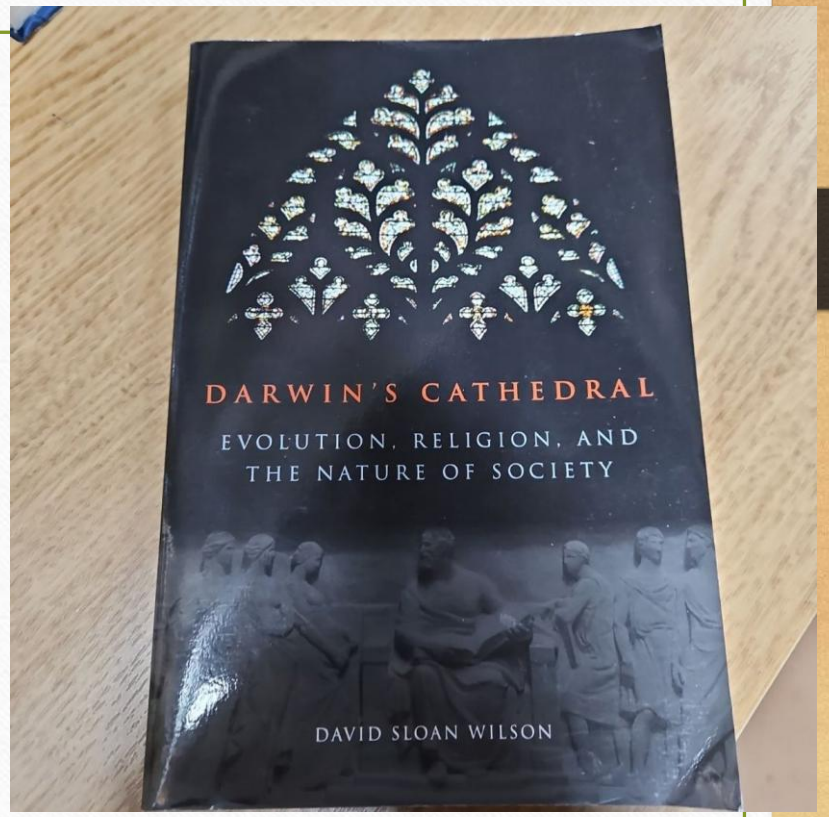
Group selection

- Initial dismissal of the idea by Dawkins and Pinker
  - Within groups, selfishness prevails; between groups, selfishness fails.
  - Selfish people will outperform cooperators
- Joe Henrich,
  - "What Steven Pinker wants banished from our science is a modeling tool that has proved useful for breaking down and analyzing different components of a selective process."



Group selection

- Two different languages describing the same world.
  - Math modelers
- Group selection is like hemispheres
  - Naive then more sophisticated



Two examples to see the possibility

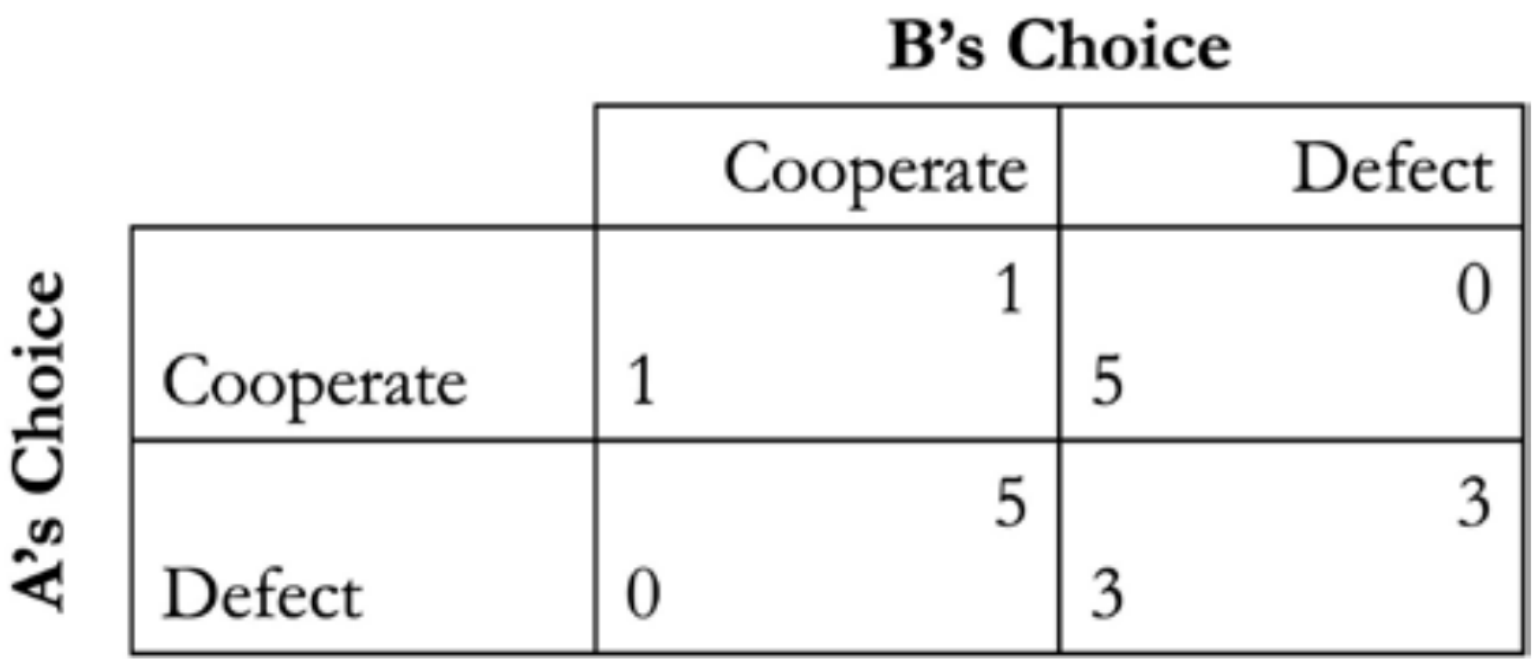
A's Choice \ B's Choice	Stag	Hare
Stag	3 3	1 0
Hare	0 1	1 1

Figure 7.2. Stag Hunt payoff matrix.

A's Choice \ B's Choice	Cooperate	Defect
Cooperate	1 1	0 5
Defect	5 0	3 3

Figure 7.1. Prisoner's Dilemma payoff matrix.

- Prisoner's Dilemma
- If full of cooperators
- If full of defectors
- So even though the overall "group" payoff—just adding both prisoners' payoffs together—favors cooperation at that group level, the individual benefits of defection are more immediate



A's Choice	B's Choice: Cooperate	B's Choice: Defect
Cooperate	1 1	0 5
Defect	5 0	3 3

Figure 7.1. Prisoner's Dilemma payoff matrix.

Stag Hunt

- If everyone hunts stags
- If everyone hunts hares
- Group level comparison

		B's Choice: Stag	B's Choice: Hare
A's Choice	Stag	3 3	1 0
	Hare	0 1	1 1

Figure 7.2. Stag Hunt payoff matrix.

Religion/culture as setting control

- The Shakers and the Latter-Day Saints example
- Religions as catalysts in cultural evolution





- The Latter-Day Saints have been among the fastest growing religions in the world, and boast some sixteen and a half million members spread across the globe. In contrast, the Shakers have not fared numerically well. In 2019 the Shaker newsletter The Clarion announced the church's full and complete membership list: Brother Andrew, Brother Arnold, and Sister June.
- «کلیسای قدیسان آخرالزمان (مورمون‌ها) از جمله سریع‌ترین ادیانِ در حال رشد در جهان بوده است و حدود شانزده و نیم میلیون عضو در سراسر دنیا دارد. در مقابل، شیکرها از نظر تعداد اعضا چندان موفق نبوده‌اند. در سال ۲۰۱۹، خبرنامهٔ شیکرها با نام *The Clarion* فهرست کامل اعضای کلیسا را اعلام کرد: برادر اندرو، برادر آرنولد، و خواهر جون.»

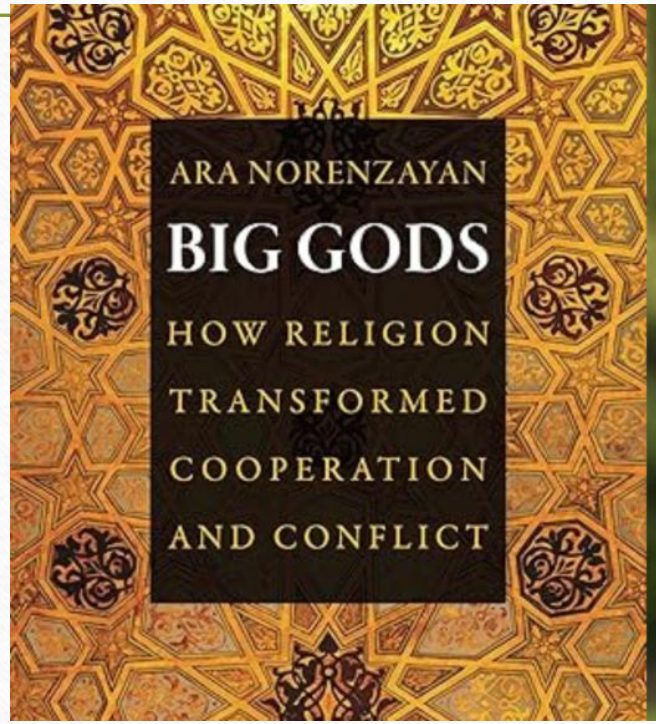
Why did major religions persist?

- Religions end up in **competition** with each other
- Conformist transmission, norm psychology, and CREDs
- Between-group variability
- Not because their contents are especially catchy or memorable or intuitive, but because their contents motivate actions that benefit cultural groups
- Features to outcompete rivals
  - Cooperation or outreach or reproduction



Big Gods

- The shift to **larger-scale cooperation** roughly parallels the **emergence of the big, powerful, and morally concerned gods**
- Religions as catalysts in cultural evolution
- Similar "settings,"
  - Global consistency among believers





Cooperation and pro-sociality

- Empirical research
- Religious communes outlived secular communes.
- Sosis and colleagues specifically linked this pattern to costly CREDs



Cooperation and pro-sociality

- Roes and Raymond
- Cross-cultural data
- pertaining to the **types of religious beliefs** and their levels of **societal complexity**
- Findings: **bigger, more complex** (and by inference more cooperative) groups tended to espouse beliefs in **moralizing high gods**
- All gods are moralizing!



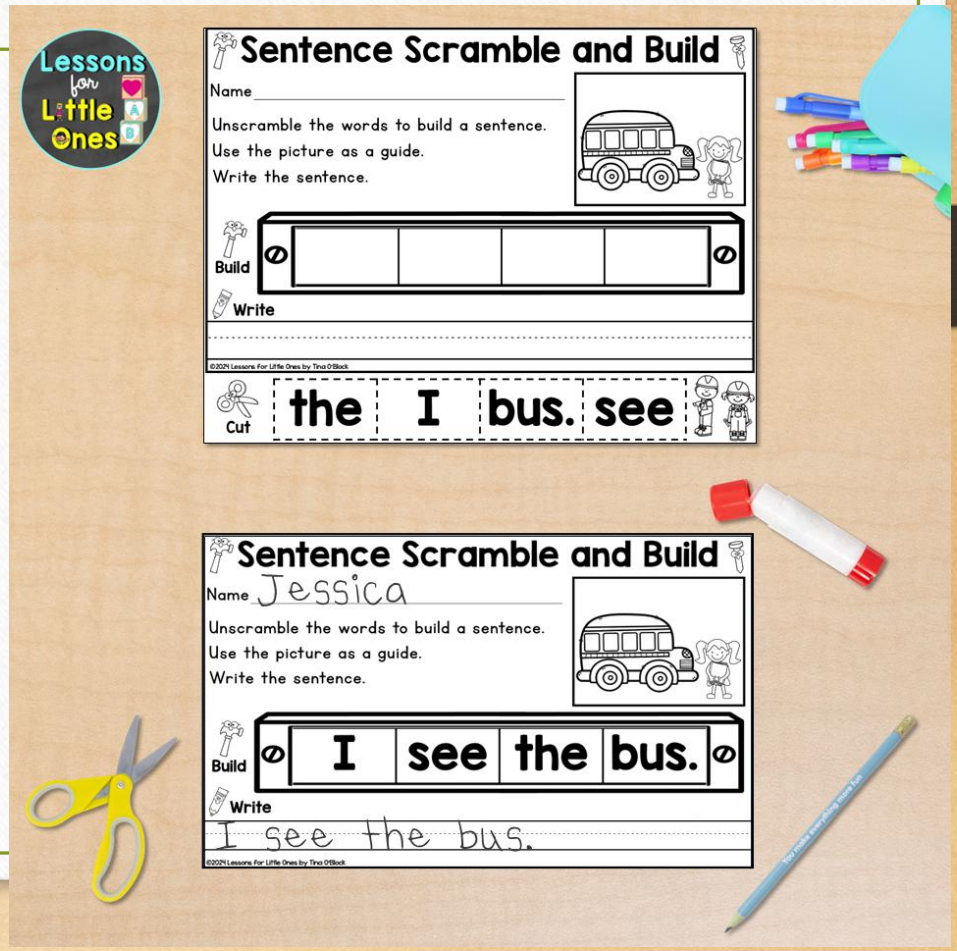
Cooperation and pro-sociality

- Joe Henrich
- Play several different standard **economic games** that measure cooperative and fairness norms.
- Found that -Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and the like—were more **cooperative** than people who didn't
- Goes beyond in-group kindness



Do Reminders of God Increase Cooperation?

- Direct causal relationship to cooperation?
- Scrambled sentence manipulation
  - A fad
  - Replication crisis
  - Replication project (one third of publications)
  - Not really priming (the tool does not work)



Do religious reminders do nothing?

- Mark Aveyard
- Participants were Arabic-speaking Muslim students at the University of Sharjah, in the United Arab Emirates.
- Two-minute audio clip prior to completing a task that measures honesty
- Half of the participants got a clip that merely had city sounds, full of traffic and whatnot.
- Half of the participants got a clip that was identical except that partway through the clip, the **adhan,** or Muslim call to prayer, blared.



Other empirical work

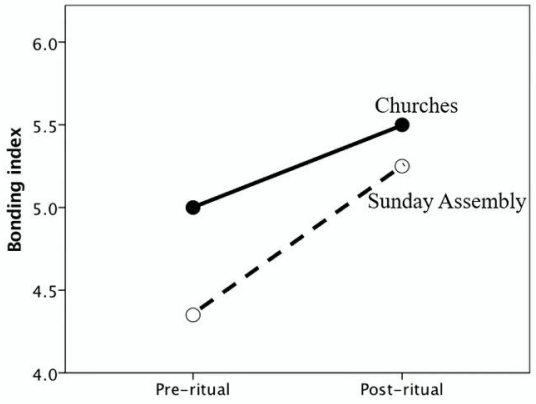
- Erik Duhaime
- More naturalistic field study in Marrakesh
- He found that marketgoers were more prosocial immediately after the **adhan** had been made



Psychological readiness or pure culture?

- Self-transcendence/identity fusion and decentering? (Spiritually grounded!)
- Exaptation capacities (empathy and mindsight)
- Is it like a muscle that gets stronger?
- Is it just the impact of story-telling and interpretation (chaos management)
- Is it the psychological readiness or the pure impact of culture?
- Similar to individualistic and collective… is it a muscle that gets stronger?
- Manipulating and playing with religious traditional habits (selfishness/need for wisdom)
- Nietzsche and William James (slaves and masters)
- My dissertation

Religious Rituals and Group Bonding



- Pain threshold and Sense of bonding to congregation increases after a service
- Naltrexone confirms this is due to endorphins

