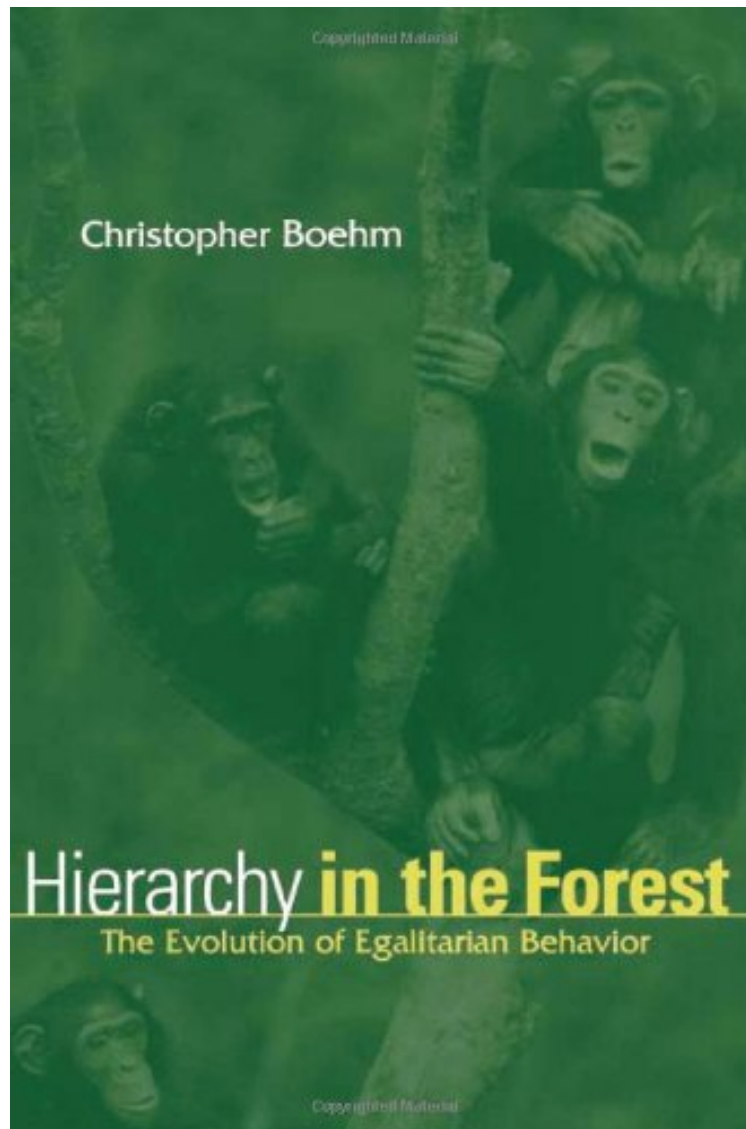


(Free and download) Hierarchy in the Forest: The Evolution of Egalitarian Behavior

Hierarchy in the Forest: The Evolution of Egalitarian Behavior

Christopher Boehm

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Christopher Boehm : Hierarchy in the Forest: The Evolution of Egalitarian Behavior before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Hierarchy in the Forest: The Evolution of Egalitarian Behavior:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Then he points out how unique that ethic is among the other species of great apes that are our closest cousins By Kevin Corn This book is not new, but for anyone interested in human nature, it is still entirely relevant. Boehm points to some very incongruous phenomena. First, most evidence suggests

that the earliest groups of humans seem to have been governed by a very strict egalitarian ethic, much as surviving communities of nomadic hunters and gatherers still are. Then he points out how unique that ethic is among the other species of great apes that are our closest cousins. Most notably, the chimps and gorillas live in despotic bands led by despotic alpha males, all of whom are eventually overthrown by younger stronger depots. Finally he notes that as human societies developed settled agriculture and then civilization, despotism and hierarchy reemerge. How can we explain these things? Boehm's answer is that anatomically modern humans emerged in a widespread upheaval in which cooperative groups of non-dominant humans--sometimes including females--made a compact with each other to join against any potential alpha despot. Boehm calls this an "inverted hierarchy" by which he means that humans retained their competitive urges and their will to dominate others. Nevertheless, their will to be free from the domination of alphas was an even stronger urge. Further, their ability to cooperate within the constraints of an egalitarian ethic gave them an evolutionary advantage over other foraging nomads. Then, as new economies and more sedentary lifestyles began to emerge, they lost that competitive advantage and the old despotism reemerged. Anyone interested in the struggle between egalitarian and hierarchical styles of social organization--as well as the concept of human nature should not miss reading this very important book. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Interesting Read By Rio Olesky Extremely well researched and referenced. Somewhat repetitive however. He could have made his points more directly and succinctly but I guess that's how one writes a scholarly tome. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By John Littleton This text offers one of the clearest understandings of hunter-gatherer lifeway I have ever read.

Are humans by nature hierarchical or egalitarian? *Hierarchy in the Forest* addresses this question by examining the evolutionary origins of social and political behavior. Christopher Boehm, an anthropologist whose fieldwork has focused on the political arrangements of human and nonhuman primate groups, postulates that egalitarianism is in effect a hierarchy in which the weak combine forces to dominate the strong. The political flexibility of our species is formidable: we can be quite egalitarian, we can be quite despotic. *Hierarchy in the Forest* traces the roots of these contradictory traits in chimpanzee, bonobo, gorilla, and early human societies. Boehm looks at the loose group structures of hunter-gatherers, then at tribal segmentation, and finally at present-day governments to see how these conflicting tendencies are reflected. *Hierarchy in the Forest* claims new territory for biological anthropology and evolutionary biology by extending the domain of these sciences into a crucial aspect of human political and social behavior. This book will be a key document in the study of the evolutionary basis of genuine altruism.

From Publishers Weekly Boehm, professor of anthropology and director of the Jane Goodall Research Center at the University of Southern California, ranges broadly in his quest to determine the evolutionary origins of social and political behavior. Combining an exhaustive ethnographic survey of human societies from groups of hunter-gatherers to contemporary residents of the Balkans with a detailed analysis of the behavioral attributes of nonhuman primates (chimpanzees, gorillas, bonobos), Boehm focuses on whether humans are hierarchical or egalitarian by nature. His thesis "is that egalitarianism does not result from the mere absence of hierarchy, as is commonly assumed. Rather egalitarianism involves a very special type of hierarchy, a curious type that is based on antihierarchical feelings." This "reverse dominance hierarchy," as Boehm calls it, depends on the rank and file banding together "to deliberately dominate their potential master if they wish to remain equal." Boehm extends his analysis to argue that the processes of group selection originally advanced by David Sloan Wilson can account for the evolution of altruistic behavior in humans. While Boehm's hypotheses are not always persuasive, they are invariably intriguing and well documented. His presentation can be difficult for the nonspecialist, but he raises topics of wide interest and his book should gain attention. (Dec.) Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. This well-written book, geared toward an audience with background in the behavioral and evolutionary sciences but accessible to a broad readership, raises two general questions: 'What is an egalitarian society?' and 'How have these societies evolved?'...[Christopher Boehm] takes the reader on a journey from the Arctic to the Americas, from Australia to Africa, in search of hunter-gatherer and tribal societies that emanate the egalitarian ethos--one that promotes generosity, altruism and sharing but forbids upstartism, aggression and egoism. Throughout this journey, Boehm tantalizes the reader with vivid anthropological accounts of ridicule, criticism, ostracism and even execution--prevalent tactics used by subordinates in egalitarian societies to level the social playing field...*Hierarchy in the Forest* is an interesting and thought-provoking book that is surely an important contribution to perspectives on human sociality and politics. (Ryan Earley American Scientist) Combining an exhaustive ethnographic survey of human societies from groups of hunter-gatherers to contemporary residents of the Balkans with a detailed analysis of the behavioral attributes of non-human primates (chimpanzees, gorillas, bonobos), Boehm focuses on whether humans are hierarchical or egalitarian by nature...[Boehm's hypotheses] are invariably intriguing and well documented...He raises topics of wide interest and his book should get attention. (Publishers Weekly) Boehm has been the first to look at egalitarianism with a cold, unromantic eye. He sees it as a victory over hierarchical tendencies, which are equally marked in our species. I would predict that his insightful examination will reverberate within anthropology and the social sciences as well as among biologists interested in the evolution of

social systems. (Frans de Waal, Emory University) Hierarchy in the Forest is an original and stimulating contribution to thinking about the origins of egalitarianism. I personally find Boehm's ideas convincing, but whether one agrees with him or not, he has formulated his hypotheses in such a way that this book is likely to set the terms of the discussion for the foreseeable future. (Barbara Smuts, University of Michigan) The most unique and interesting feature of this clear, well written book is the way Boehm links the study of nonhuman primates (particularly chimpanzees) to traditional concepts of political anthropology. As a political scientist, I was intrigued by Boehm's suggestion that democracy, both ancient and modern, could be understood as the expression of the same natural dispositions that support the egalitarianism of nomadic bands and sedentary tribes. I expect that many scholars in biology, anthropology, and the social sciences would learn from this stimulating book. Even those who disagree with Boehm's arguments are likely to be provoked in instructive ways. (Larry Arnhart, Northern Illinois University) Chris Boehm boldly and cogently attacks a whole orthodoxy in anthropology which sees hunter-gatherer 'egalitarianism' as somehow the basic form of human society. No praise can be too high for Boehm's brilliant and courageous book. (Robin Fox, Rutgers University) From a theoretical perspective, some of the most convincing arguments presented by Boehm center around the pivotal role of language in the evolution of egalitarianism. More provocative, however, are Boehm's ideas on how between-group selection has operated to generate egalitarianism. (Harold Gouzoules The Quarterly of Biology) Hierarchy in the Forest claims new territory for biological anthropology and evolutionary biology by extending the domain of these sciences into a crucial aspect of human political and social behavior. This book will be a key document in the study of the evolutionary basis of genuine altruism. (Primate Science) Boehm has been the first to look at egalitarianism with a cold, unromantic eye. He sees it as a victory over hierarchical tendencies, which are equally marked in our species. I would predict that his insightful examination will reverberate within anthropology and the social sciences as well as among biologists interested in the evolution of social systems. (Frans de Waal, Emory University)