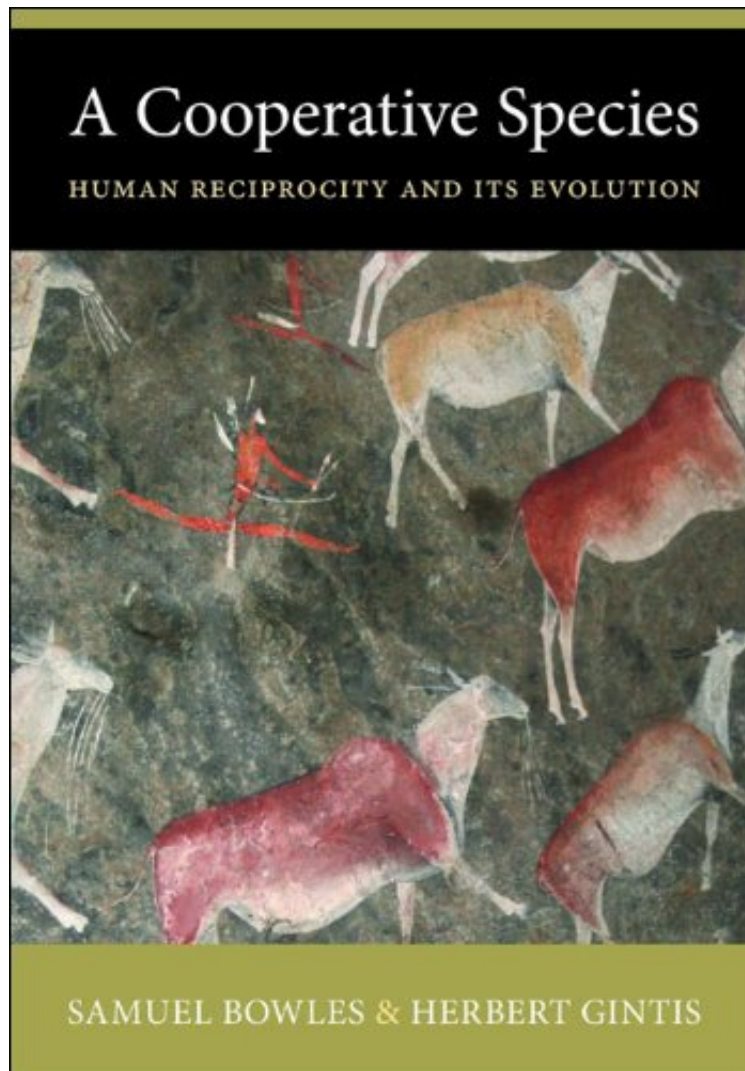


(Ebook pdf) A Cooperative Species: Human Reciprocity and Its Evolution

A Cooperative Species: Human Reciprocity and Its Evolution

Samuel Bowles, Herbert Gintis
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Samuel Bowles, Herbert Gintis : A Cooperative Species: Human Reciprocity and Its Evolution before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised A Cooperative Species: Human Reciprocity and Its Evolution:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A thorough theoretical discussion of the origins of cooperationBy J. RothwellThe authors lay out a systematic and comprehensive theory of human cooperation, drawing on diverse fields and facts from experiments in game theory, genetic, and archeological evidence. Their theory has deep implications and is highly compelling.The mathematical presentations and detailed discussions of theory will be too arcane and technical for most general audience readers and even undergraduates, but the early chapters are relatively clear and less dense.My summary is that this is a hugely important academic book on a vital topic, and it persuasively shows

that humans help each other with no regard to personal benefit and have since our earliest origins in Africa.1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. This is the best reference I have found for the recent and current ...By REWThis is the best reference I have found for the recent and current thin king and formal modeling of human cooperation: groups, kin, tribes, etc. The two authors are deeply involved in the Santa Fe Institute and they are individually and jointly involved with some of the best work on the sociobiology and evolution of human culture. Their presentation of others' work in the field is clear and complete. I have shared this book with my advanced students in applied social science and I suspect I will never get it back! If you have interests in formal models of cooperation in anthropology, sociology, economics, or evolutionary psychology, this book is a must-have.14 of 15 people found the following review helpful. A remarkable synthesisBy Peter Godfrey-SmithThis book puts together an overall picture of human cooperation and its evolution, drawing on evolutionary theory, anthropology, experimental and theoretical economics, computer modeling, and much else. The book is also well-informed on the philosophical side too (philosophy is my own field). A central role is played in the book by experiments which are taken to show that humans tend to have strong 'social preferences.' As well as caring for our own welfare, we have quite elaborate preferences about the welfare of others, both positive and negative. It is a mistake to see human behavior as fundamentally self-interested - or self-interested except in contexts where our biological relatives are involved. Instead BG want to build an evolutionary story that takes seriously the deeply social character of human psychology. This leads to them to argue for a central role for competition between groups in our evolutionary history - direct competition in warfare, and competition over resources. A lot of the book is concerned with the construction of formal models of how various social behaviors could evolve in a context where both within-group and between-group interactions are important.The way that BG pull together material from the fields listed above (economics, biology, anthropology...) is very impressive. What is especially striking is the level of detail with which they draw on each field. The book is a coherent and argumentative synthesis of very diverse traditions of work. To me, the balance of the book was not quite right. The weight put on the models was a little excessive. There are just so many models developed, in considerable detail, and I think the book could have been a little stronger if a smaller number of models had been given more attention, and if a little more space was given to the empirical side. Some of the models belong in journal articles rather than this book. This is a minor complaint, but I worry that some readers might devour the first few chapters and then get bogged down in the middle, not making it to the end. This would be a shame, as some of the most interesting material comes at the end - including the very final pages. So if would recommend skipping rather than stopping, if the reader finds the middle of the book too model-heavy.

Why do humans, uniquely among animals, cooperate in large numbers to advance projects for the common good? Contrary to the conventional wisdom in biology and economics, this generous and civic-minded behavior is widespread and cannot be explained simply by far-sighted self-interest or a desire to help close genealogical kin. In *A Cooperative Species*, Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis--pioneers in the new experimental and evolutionary science of human behavior--show that the central issue is not why selfish people act generously, but instead how genetic and cultural evolution has produced a species in which substantial numbers make sacrifices to uphold ethical norms and to help even total strangers. The authors describe how, for thousands of generations, cooperation with fellow group members has been essential to survival. Groups that created institutions to protect the civic-minded from exploitation by the selfish flourished and prevailed in conflicts with less cooperative groups. Key to this process was the evolution of social emotions such as shame and guilt, and our capacity to internalize social norms so that acting ethically became a personal goal rather than simply a prudent way to avoid punishment. Using experimental, archaeological, genetic, and ethnographic data to calibrate models of the coevolution of genes and culture as well as prehistoric warfare and other forms of group competition, *A Cooperative Species* provides a compelling and novel account of how humans came to be moral and cooperative.

"The achievement of Bowles and Gintis is to have put together from the many disparate sources of evidence a story as plausible as any we're likely to get in the present state of behavioural sciences of how human beings came to be as cooperative as they are."--W.G. Runciman, London of Books "In *A Cooperative Species*, economists Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis update their ideas on the evolutionary origins of altruism. Containing new data and analysis, their book is a sustained and detailed argument for how genes and culture have together shaped our ability to cooperate. . . . By presenting clear models that are tied tightly to empirically derived parameters, Bowles and Gintis encourage much-needed debate on the origins of human cooperation."--Peter Richerson, *Nature* "An outstanding book that presents an important contribution and quite simply raises the scientific standard associated with the difficult and contentious problem of how human altruism evolved."--Charles Efferson, *Economic Journal* "*A Cooperative Species: Human Reciprocity and Its Evolution* states a clearly articulated gene-culture coevolution explanation for why we are a cooperative species. It is a read that will stretch readers' minds a bit, and I think it is an eminently valuable read. . . . I await with eagerness the next time Bowles and Gintis are out cooperating again."--Jonathan D. Springer, *PsycCRITIQUES* "[T]he authors' systematic and mathematical approach will appeal to any reader seriously interested

in learning about alternative theories of adaptive altruism, and their treatment of cultural inheritance using population-genetic models is first-rate. Although this book will by no means settle the debate surrounding the evolutionary origin of altruism, it is a worthy addition and is well worth reading."--P. William Hughes, *Journal of Economic Issues*

"Bowles and Gintis are clearly not short of ideas. The attention they draw to the role of conflict and coordinated punishment in the evolution of our cooperative and reciprocal species makes the book very much worth reading. Their focus on the evolution of human nature also paints a much richer picture of our behavior than traditional economics tends to do."--*Journal of Economic Literature*

"Bowles and Gintis are not the first to claim that competition, conflict, and war between human groups is the foundation of cooperation and of society. However, their integration of this insight into evolutionary game theory stands to increase the accessibility of this powerful idea to a large number of scholars working in a dominant theoretical perspective that spans the social and biological sciences. This is one reason why I recommend their new book *A Cooperative Species: Human Reciprocity and Its Evolution*."--Noah Mark, *Journal of Artificial Societies and Social Simulation*

"This book makes a strong case for returning as a discipline to this vexed theme. I can only hope we do so with the analytical ingenuity and empirical humility that Bowles and Gintis display."--Jacob G. Foster, *American Journal of Sociology*

"*Cooperative Species: Human Reciprocity and Its Evolution* should be of interest to individuals across multiple disciplines. The book provides a compelling argument supported by multiple kinds of theoretical and empirical evidence. Although the book does use some technical language and examples in places, the explanation is sufficiently clear to make the main ideas and arguments of the book accessible to individuals who were not previously familiar with these technicalities."--Christopher M. Caldwell, *Metapsychology Online*

"[This book] makes important contributions to our understanding of the nature and function of emotions in politics, including the evolution of emotion and cognition and their linkages to democratic governance. . . . [It] should become [an] important resource for students of politics who have the requisite background in the behavioral sciences and wish to develop an integrated, life science perspective in their own work."--Michael S. Latner, *Politics and the Life Sciences From the Back Cover*

"*A Cooperative Species* is a fresh and pioneering entry into the pivotal field of human social evolution."--Edward O. Wilson, *Harvard University*

"In *A Cooperative Species*, Bowles and Gintis draw on their own research and teaching about understanding the complex human being in the context of diverse ways of organizing life. They show that humans can evolve cooperative strategies when they participate in groups that share long-term similar norms and are willing to sanction those that do not follow group agreements. An important book for all social scientists."--Elinor Ostrom, *Nobel Laureate in Economics*

"Why we form cooperative societies is not hard to understand given all of the advantages we derive, but how we do it is far less understood. Humans have powerful selfish tendencies, but Bowles and Gintis are not of the school of thought that everything can be reduced to selfishness. They muster all of their expert knowledge to make clear that evolution has produced a species with a truly cooperative spirit and the means to encourage cooperation in others."--Frans de Waal, author of *The Age of Empathy*

"Bowles and Gintis stress that cooperation among individuals who are only distantly related is a critical distinguishing feature of the human species. They argue forcefully that the best explanation for such cooperation is altruism. Many will dispute this claim, but it deserves serious consideration."--Eric Maskin, *Nobel Laureate in Economics*

About the Author: Samuel Bowles pioneers in the new experimental and evolutionary science of human behavior. Gintis holds faculty positions at the Santa Fe Institute and Central European University. Bowles is Professor Emeritus at the University of Massachusetts Amherst.