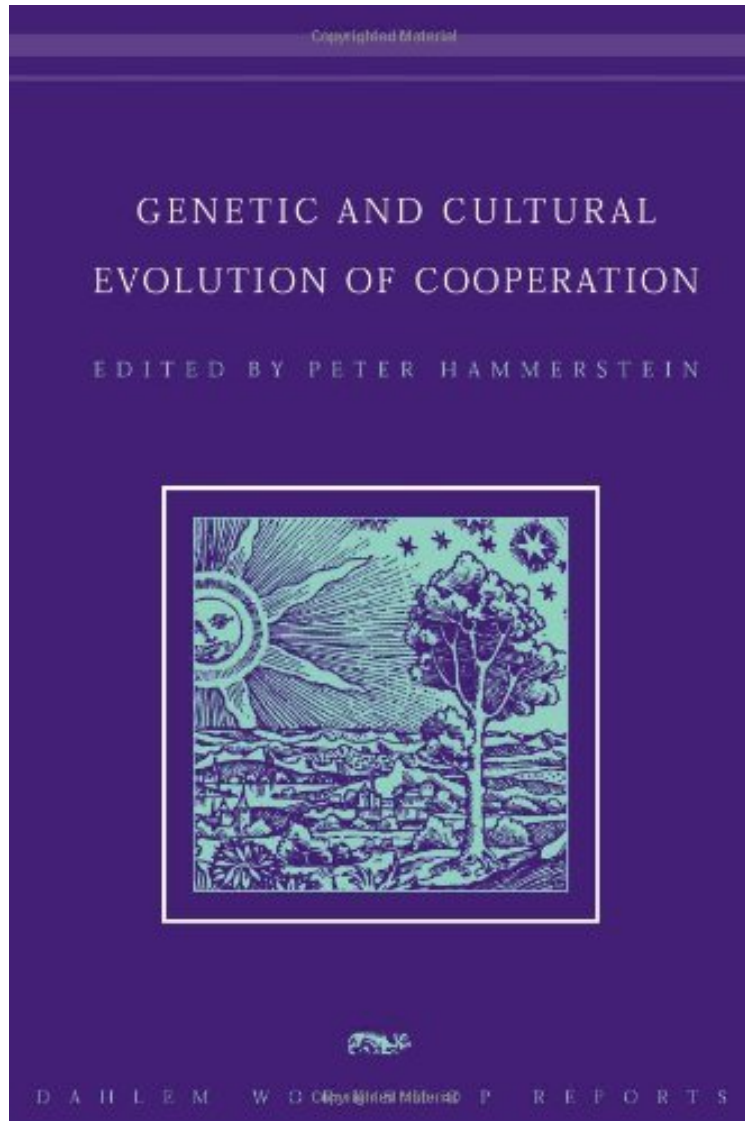


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Genetic and Cultural Evolution of Cooperation (Dahlem Workshop Reports)

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From The MIT Press : Genetic and Cultural Evolution of Cooperation (Dahlem Workshop Reports) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Genetic and Cultural Evolution of Cooperation (Dahlem Workshop Reports):

23 of 25 people found the following review helpful. If you want to cooperate....By E. N. Anderson Evolutionary theory has stressed competition, but cooperation is incredibly common in nature. Mitochondria, originally bacterial infections of cells, are now essential components of cells. Most plants depend on fungal associates to help them get water and

nutrients. Social animals abound at all levels of complexity. Most complexly social of all are humans. Until recently, this widespread mutualism, mutual aid, and general sociability was understudied and undertheorized. This book is a major step toward creating theories of how such systems can have arisen in a competitive world. I am not competent to judge the papers on mitochondria and other cell-level wonders, but the other papers are authoritative and original. The studies of human society and cooperation are absolutely brilliant, and put together new and powerful theories of the evolution of human cooperation. The political implications of these theories are alluded to, but not discussed in depth. Basically, humans are designed to be grassroots cooperators. We have a range of mechanisms to regulate society, detect and sanction cheaters, discuss how to maintain the system, and so on and on, and most of these abilities have roots well back in our primate heritage. The idea that people are selfish, including Thomas Hobbes' fantasy of "savages" living in a "war of each against all" until a king shaped things up, does not stand investigation. Impressive in this book is new evidence from behavioral economics showing just how cooperative people are, and new models that can deal with that in terms of evolutionary and economic theory. Somebody should get a Nobel in economics somewhere along the line! I fear only that ordinary readers and the popular media will not find this book; it is formidably difficult reading--you have to know biology, anthropology, theoretical economics, and even cell physiology to get through all of it. Help! I hope somebody is writing a popular knockoff, to counter the idiotic garbage put out by those who have confused political ideology with evolutionary theory and given us floods of nonsense about the "selfish gene," the impossibility of social cooperation, the naturalness of selfishness, and even the biological inevitability of rape and spouse abuse! In any case, this book puts the study of cooperation on a sounder scientific footing. We need social applications, before it is too late.

Current thinking in evolutionary biology holds that competition among individuals is the key to understanding natural selection. When competition exists, it is obvious that conflict arises; the emergence of cooperation, however, is less straightforward and calls for in-depth analysis. Much research is now focused on defining and expanding the evolutionary models of cooperation. Understanding the mechanisms of cooperation has relevance for fields other than biology. Anthropology, economics, mathematics, political science, primatology, and psychology are adopting the evolutionary approach and developing analogies based on it. Similarly, biologists use elements of economic game theory and analyze cooperation in "evolutionary games." Despite this, exchanges between researchers in these different disciplines have been limited. Seeking to fill this gap, the 90th Dahlem Workshop was convened. This book, which grew out of that meeting, addresses such topics as emotions in human cooperation, reciprocity, biological markets, cooperation and conflict in multicellularity, genomic and intercellular cooperation, the origins of human cooperation, and the cultural evolution of cooperation; the emphasis is on open questions and future research areas. The book makes a significant contribution to a growing process of interdisciplinary cross-fertilization on this issue.

"A revolution is happening in the borderland between cellular evolution and the evolution of whole organisms and cooperating entities in a community. The authors of the papers in this book are addressing this revolution in a cogent and clear manner. There is much to explain about the cooperative or not-so-cooperative behavior of homo sapiens, and the work in this volume goes a long way toward providing a clear explanation." Elinor Ostrom, Arthur F. Bentley Professor of Political Science, Indiana University
The book offers a surprising wealth of ideas on the biological and cultural evolution of cooperation. It presents exciting and thought-provoking reading material for everybody interested in the subject matter. (Reinhard Selten, Nobel Laureate in Economic Sciences in 1994 and Professor Emeritus of Economics, University of Bonn)
This timely monograph will prove essential reading - not only as a state-of-the-art overview, but also as an informed agenda for future research. (Mike Mesterton-Gibbons, American Journal of Human Biology)
About the Author Peter Hammerstein is Professor in Organismic Evolution at the Institute for Theoretical Biology at Humboldt University, Berlin and an external member of the interdisciplinary Santa Fe Institute.