

Preface

The behavioral sciences have traditionally offered two contrasting explanations of cooperation. One, favored by sociologists and anthropologists, considers the willingness to subordinate self-interest to the needs of the social group to be part of human nature. Another, favored by economists and biologists, treats cooperation as the result of the interaction of selfish agents maximizing their long-term individual material interests. *Moral Sentiments and Material Interests* argues that a significant fraction of people fit neither of these stereotypes. Rather, they are *conditional cooperators* and *altruistic punishers*. We show that a high level of cooperation can be attained when social groups have a sufficient fraction of such types, which we call *strong reciprocators*, and we draw implications of this phenomenon for political philosophy and social policy.

The research presented in this book was conceived in 1997, inspired by early empirical results of Ernst Fehr and his coworkers at the University of Zürich and the analytical models of cultural evolution pioneered by Robert Boyd and Peter Richerson. Behavioral scientists from several disciplines met at the University of Massachusetts in October 1998 to explore preliminary hypotheses. We then commissioned a series of papers from a number of authors and met again at the Santa Fe Institute in March 2001 to review and coordinate our results, which, suitably revised and updated, together with some newly commissioned papers, are presented in the chapters below.

This research is distinctive not only in its conclusions but in its methodology as well. First, we rely on data gathered in controlled laboratory and field environments to make assertions concerning human motivation. Second, we ignore the disciplinary boundaries that have thwarted attempts to develop generally valid analytical models of human behavior and combine insights from economics, anthropology,

evolutionary and human biology, social psychology, and sociology. We bind these disciplines analytically by relying on a common lexicon of game theory and a consistent behavioral methodology.

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