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Eyal Winter

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# Individuality and Entanglement by Herbert Gintis

Eyal Winter<sup>1</sup>

The School of Business, University of Leicester

and

The Federmann Center for the Study of Rationality, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Email; [eyal.winter@huji.ac.il](mailto:eyal.winter@huji.ac.il)

Gintis' book contains a brilliant collection of ideas on society and behavior, some presented informally but in a crystal-clear manner, some using formal models and mathematics to build the argument. It offers a wonderful synthesis between economics and other social science disciplines, between human behavior and evolutionary biology, and between theory and evidence.

No single review can do justice to the book by surveying all the topics it covers and I will not attempt to do so here. Instead, I would like to discuss two topics that I enjoyed reading about the most and found most interesting. These are not necessarily the most important chapters of the book, but the ones that best matched my idiosyncratic taste.

The relationship between loss aversion and the endowment effect, on the one hand, and territoriality and property rights, on the other, is a startling insight that is discussed extensively in the book. Gintis goes beyond the convincing argument that territoriality is an equilibrium mechanism that reduces conflict by means of endowing the incumbent with a higher value for the territory compared with that of a potential intruder. He presents an elegant formal model that endogenizes the contestants' commitment to fight. This model provides very interesting results on the propensity of conflict as a function of primitives such as migration costs and the level of harm that combatants can inflict on one another.

Gintis also brings startling experimental evidence from the literature in developmental psychology showing that 2–3 year old children are cognizant of possession and respect each other's property rights, and discusses related experiments with nonhuman animals from butterflies to horses to baboons. The most amazing one is an experiment by Nicolas Davies in the 70s showing that a fight between two speckled wood butterflies each of which is "tricked" into thinking that it was the first to occupy a sunny patch will last 10 times as longer than a fight between an incumbent and an intruder.

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<sup>1</sup> Corresponding address: Eyal Winter, The Federmann Center for the Study of Rationality, The Hebrew University, 91904 Jerusalem, Israel. Email: [eyal.winter@huji.ac.il](mailto:eyal.winter@huji.ac.il) Phone +972-54-8820034

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