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Cover: The role of feasting in ancient rituals and social life is attracting a growing number of archaeological inquires. The approximately 4,000-year-old perforated plaque shown here, in a composite image, portrays a procession of Sumerians bearing offerings that contributed to regular community feasts. **Page 331** (Photo: University of Chicago Oriental Institute. FX: Mark Gilvey/Design Imaging)

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Letters

A voice from beyond the grave?

The lively article on butterfly IQ ("How Bright is a Butterfly?" SN: 4/11/98, p. 233) errs in stating that Charles Darwin "wrote in 1895." Darwin died in 1882, so the quotation must have come from a later edition of his book.

*Jim Zosel
Minneapolis, Minn.*

Improved ID may worsen crime

I read "Private Eyes" (SN: 4/4/98, p. 216) with apprehension. If automatic teller machines (ATMs) someday permit presentation of a body part for authentication purposes, then ruthless muggers will no longer be content with taking your wallet, watch, and jewelry—they'll cut off your finger or rip out your eyeball in order to fool the fingerprint analyzer or retinal scanner and gain complete access to your bank account.

ATMs should always require a personal

identification number (PIN). In fact, users really need *two* PINS—an access PIN for withdrawing money and a duress PIN to trip a silent alarm if the user is being forced to withdraw money.

*Skylar Barclay Sudderth
Brownwood, Texas*

Role of game theory in economics

The issues and theories discussed in "Yours, Mine, and Ours" (SN: 3/28/98, p. 205) do not challenge traditional economic theory, they complement it. Traditional theory does a rather good job of explaining the behavior of large, impersonal markets, which constitute an enormous fraction of commercial activity. It often does a bad job of explaining the behavior of small groups, where individuals know each other and may interact repeatedly over time, or nonmarket situations, such as public choice of government policy. Every example discussed in the article concerned one of those two cases.

Modern game theory offers insights into

such situations, which is precisely why economists have been so excited about it for at least the last 15 years. Although economists may disagree about the particulars of the theories discussed in the article, virtually all agree that the general approach is both useful and consistent with traditional theory.

*John J. Seater
Professor of Economics
North Carolina State University
Raleigh, N.C.*

The experiments apparently did not take into consideration the role that trust plays in cooperation. Because cooperation is a two-way street, each cooperator has to be able to trust the other's intention.

Trust is easier among people who are most like us or with whom we have had some experience. The smaller and more homogeneous the cooperating group and the longer their shared past, the easier it is to establish

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