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Professor Harvey Whitehouse is Chair of Social Anthropology at the University of Oxford and Director of the Centre for the Study of Social Cohesion.

One of the world's leading experts on the evolutionary basis of human culture, Whitehouse has spent four decades studying some of the most extreme groups on earth: from the battlefields of the Arab Spring, via millenarian cults on Pacific islands, to violent football fans in South America. Along the way, he has undertaken research at some of the world's most important archaeological sites, brain-scanning facilities, and child psychology labs – all with a view to pioneering a new, scientific approach to the study of human society.

Whitehouse's work has featured in the Telegraph, Guardian, Scientific American and New Scientist, and he has delivered talks at the World Economic Forum and the United Nations. He lives in Oxford.

Harvey Whitehouse

Inheritance

The Evolutionary Origins of the Modern World

The ancient inheritance that made us who we are. The ancient inheritance that is now driving us to ruin.

Each of us is endowed with an inheritance. A set of ancient biases, forged through countless millennia of natural and cultural selection, which shape every facet of our behaviour. For generations, this inheritance has taken us to ever greater heights, driving the rise of more sophisticated technologies, more organized religions, more expansive empires. But now, for the first time, it is failing us. We find ourselves careering towards a future of unprecedented political polarization, deadlier wars, and environmental destruction.

In *Inheritance*, renowned anthropologist Harvey Whitehouse offers a sweeping account of how our evolved biases have shaped humanity's past and imperil its future. Unveiling a pioneering new way of viewing our collective history – one that weaves together psychological experiments, on-the-ground fieldwork, and big data – Whitehouse introduces three biases that shape human behaviour everywhere: conformism, religiosity, and tribalism.

These biases have catalysed the greatest transformations in human history, from the birth of agriculture and arrival of the first kings to the rise and fall of human sacrifice and creation of multiethnic empires. Yet today, they are driving us to ruin. Taking us deep into New Guinea tribes, Libyan militias, and predatory ad agencies, Whitehouse shows how the tools we once used to manage our biases are breaking down, with devastating implications for us all.

By uncovering how human nature has shaped our collective history, *Inheritance* reveals a surprising new path to solving our most urgent problems. The result is a powerful reappraisal of the human journey; one that transforms our understanding of who we are, and who we could be.

