

# NEW FROM OXFORD

## THE RITUAL ANIMAL

IMITATION AND COHESION IN THE EVOLUTION OF SOCIAL COMPLEXITY

HARVEY WHITEHOUSE



**A radical exploration of how rituals have influenced history over thousands of years.**

The ritual animal longs to belong. From infancy, we copy those around us in order to be like others, to be one with the tribe. The copying of causally opaque behaviour (rituals) has allowed cultural groups to proliferate over time and space. Rituals are a way of defining the boundaries of social groups and binding their members together. The frequency and emotional intensity of ritual performances constrains the scale and structure of cultural groups.

This pioneering study presents a theory of how two 'ritual modes' have influenced the course of human history over many thousands of years and continue to shape the groups we live in today.

### FEATURES

- Constitutes a major new paradigm for transdisciplinary social science
- Provides the most up to date and comprehensive account of the modes theory, and its evidential basis

UK: November 2021 | ~~£25.00~~ **£17.50**

US: February 2022 | ~~\$32.95~~ **\$23.07**

Hardcover | 272 pages

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