A growing body of research has revealed that people from societies that are Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich and Democratic (WEIRD) are particularly unusual.

To explain these patterns, Henrich will show how the most fundamental of human institutions—those governing marriage and the family—influence our motivations, perceptions, intuitions and emotions. He explains how one particular branch of Christianity systematically dismantled the intensive kin-based institutions in much of Latin Christendom, altering people’s psychology and opening the door to new institutional forms.

Henrich argues that the anthropological, psychological and economic sciences should transform into a unified evolutionary approach that considers not only how human nature influences our behavior and societies but also how the resulting institutions, technologies and languages subsequently shape our minds.

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Henrich’s research deploys evolutionary theory to understand how human psychology gives rise to cultural evolution and how this has shaped our species’ genetic evolution.