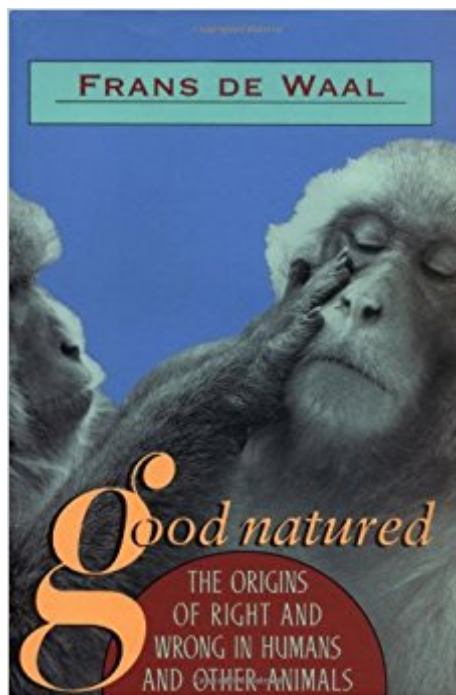


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# Good Natured: The Origins Of Right And Wrong In Humans And Other Animals



## Synopsis

To observe a dog's guilty look. to witness a gorilla's self-sacrifice for a wounded mate, to watch an elephant herd's communal effort on behalf of a stranded calf--to catch animals in certain acts is to wonder what moves them. Might there be a code of ethics in the animal kingdom? Must an animal be human to be humane? In this provocative book, a renowned scientist takes on those who have declared ethics uniquely human. Making a compelling case for a morality grounded in biology, he shows how ethical behavior is as much a matter of evolution as any other trait, in humans and animals alike. World famous for his brilliant descriptions of Machiavellian power plays among chimpanzees--the nastier side of animal life--Frans de Waal here contends that animals have a nice side as well. Making his case through vivid anecdotes drawn from his work with apes and monkeys and bolstered by the intriguing, voluminous data from his and others' ongoing research, de Waal shows us that many of the building blocks of morality are natural: they can be observed in other animals. Through his eyes, we see how not just primates but all kinds of animals, from marine mammals to dogs, respond to social rules, help each other, share food, resolve conflict to mutual satisfaction, even develop a crude sense of justice and fairness. Natural selection may be harsh, but it has produced highly successful species that survive through cooperation and mutual assistance. De Waal identifies this paradox as the key to an evolutionary account of morality, and demonstrates that human morality could never have developed without the foundation of fellow feeling our species shares with other animals. As his work makes clear, a morality grounded in biology leads to an entirely different conception of what it means to be human--and humane.

## Book Information

Hardcover: 368 pages

Publisher: Harvard University Press; 1 edition (March 1, 1996)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0674356608

ISBN-13: 978-0674356603

Product Dimensions: 9.6 x 6.4 x 1.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.5 pounds

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars 13 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #756,758 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #105 in [Books > Health, Fitness & Dieting > Psychology & Counseling > Evolutionary Psychology](#) #189 in [Books > Science & Math > Biological Sciences > Zoology > Animal Behavior & Communication](#) #651

## Customer Reviews

In *Good Natured* Frans de Waal, ethologist and primatologist, asks us to reconsider human morality in light of moral aspects that can be identified in animals. Within the complex negotiations of human society, a moral action may involve thoughts and feelings of guilt, reciprocity, obligation, expectations, rules, or community concern. De Waal finds these aspects of morality prevalent in other animal societies, mostly primate, and suggests that the two philosophical camps supporting nature and nurture may have to be disbanded in order to adequately understand human morality. A theoretician, de Waal is meticulous in his research, cautious not to extrapolate too much from his findings, and logically sound in his arguments. He also writes with precision and a flair for the dramatic, carrying readers along with graceful ease and vivid examples. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

Is morality a biological or cultural phenomenon? Can nonhuman animals be humane? Primatologist de Waal (*Chimpanzee Politics*) explores these questions in a provocative book and makes a strong case for biology. He is convinced that social tendencies come into existence via a genetic calculus rather than rational choice. He defends anthropomorphism, noting that it serves the same exploratory function as intuition in the sciences. He discusses aggression and altruism and offers abundant anecdotal evidence of moral behavior among primates and other animals?food sharing, protection, sympathy, guilt. De Waal argues that the remarkable trainability among certain species, e.g., sheepdogs and elephants, hints at a rule-based order among them. He takes issue with the animal rights movement; rights, he says, are normally accompanied by responsibilities, which cannot possibly apply to apes and other animals. Readers who enjoyed *Why Elephants Weep* (Jeffrey Masson and Susan McCarthy) will welcome this volume. Illustrations. Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc.

I found the book to be highly readable and subject matter to be fascinating. This subject is no where near my field (which is history) but found that De Waal presents the material in way that is very accessible to anyone. De Waal has an entertaining writing style that keeps you absorbed in the reading without the effort I have found in other books on the subject. It's very important for us to really look at where we come from and why we are what we are, and taking a look at our closest relatives is a good window into our minds. I found the analysis and the conclusions to be well

formed and fairly presented. The evidence he gives for his conclusions is well documented and explained. While I did have a few problems here and there, these did not detract from the overall readability and the pure enjoyment of the book. This was just a very enjoyable book that I would recommend to anyone, whether you have a deep interest in the topic or you're just looking for an interesting book to use up a few hours in the day.

Frans de Waal is one of the best known primatologists in the United States, and *GOOD NATURED* shows why. This careful study of primate behavior, both non-human and human, explores the issue of morality and the complex emotions that give rise to it. De Waal's topics range from empathy to social rules to diplomacy as he describes specific examples across primate species. The black and white pictures illustrate his points, but they are by no means the highlight of this book. De Waal's insights, which never read too much into specific behaviors, walk the fine line between objective scientific reporting and an acknowledgment of the kinship between all primates. Seeing primates through his expert eyes is an enlightening experience. This is truly an extraordinary book. I recommend it to readers who have a keen interest in primatology, sociology, and/or the kinship between humans and other species.

*Good Natured* is a book focusing on morality in the animal kingdom, specifically primates. Overall, I thought this was definitely a fairly easy and engrossing read. The book deals with the structure of primate societies and how they enforce morality, how deeply it extends through the primate family (de Waal primarily researches chimpanzees), and instances of love, guilt, aggression, deception from his own research and those of other primatologists. He also describes other philosophies and research into moral systems. I like de Waal's style: the studies he talked about were fascinating and he really keeps your interest. I guess the only negative is that the book is a little disjointed in places. For example, in the chapter on sympathy there is a section on deception. In the end he makes his own speculation on morality stretching across human boundaries and what he makes of the implications for treatment of primates and other animals. It's definitely a great read for anyone interested in the evolution of morality and primatology.

This book changed my life. Our human idea that we are masters of all creatures and that we alone have emotions is proved wrong. The pictures are marvelous. The elephant daughter returning to roll the bones of her mother long after the demise of her mother and the extremely powerful picture of the monkeys marveling at the new born, are worth the book itself. I read it twice and have given it to

many people. It is a book like, *The City of Joy*, once you read it you will never look at animals the same way or as in *The City of Joy* the human condition in the third world the same way. Marvelous.

De Waal is brilliant, objective, careful in reaching conclusions, ethical, a good writer, and has a lot to say. He is very much aware of research in related fields, such as developmental psychology. He and others place great store on observation of animals in natural settings, but also use controlled experimentation, analogous to the type of studies psychologists are always performing on college students. While I think this was an outstanding book, I would acknowledge that the beginning is slower reading than the end: more focused on the necessary vocabulary, some of the controversies, more argumentative, a little redundant. De Waal contrasts "lower" primates and chimpanzees so that we can better understand the evolution of morality, and such distinctions as that between learned adjustment and true empathy. Chimps will mourn, console, deceive; the alpha male will intervene in disputes where the only objective can be restoration of harmony. As all animals, their adaptive potential exceeds the range of behavior observed in natural settings. For example, in the wild, females do not usually spend much time with other adult females, whereas in captivity they do. In captivity, they may use their friendships/alliances to control overly aggressive males, and even influence who becomes the alpha male. While morality has a genetic basis, even in monkeys there is a cultural component. In one experiment, aggressive rhesus adolescents learned to be more tolerant after living with more peaceful stump tailed macaques for 6 months. The adaptive potential of morality is that it fosters group cohesion, which for many species is essential for defense against predators, or to find or protect resources. This is not to deny that one basis of morality is the selfish gene: by helping kin, you are helping some of your own genes to survive, so "altruistic genes" tend to perpetuate themselves.

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