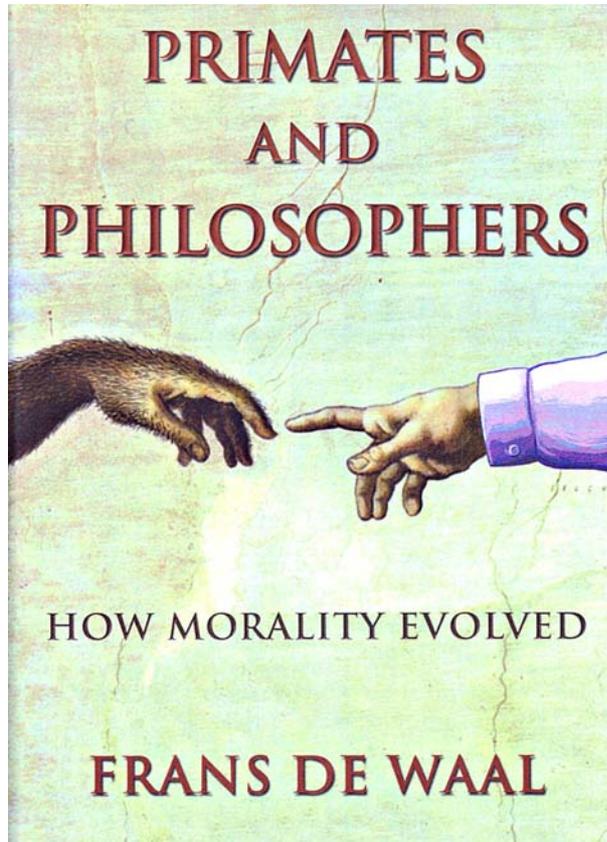


## Book of the Century



Frans De Waal (2006). *Primates and Philosophers: How Morality Evolved*. Princeton University Press. Princeton, New Jersey.

"Seeking the origin of human morality not in evolution but in human culture, science insists that we are moral by choice, not by nature." (Inside cover). Morality has been caught in the old Nature v Nurture battles that have been discredited a long time ago. Evolution and human culture cannot be disentangled from one another. Biology shapes culture and culture shape biology. It is always and everywhere an interactive process. A necessary read..

### Additional commentary

Morality is learned behavior but is deeply grounded in our evolutionary heritage not in divine grace. Pain signals harm, a danger to be avoided--pleasure signals attraction, a good to be sought. De Waal concludes that the roots of morality can be found in the essentially social nature we share with the other intelligent

primates, and that therefore morality itself is deeply rooted in our nature"--the moral senses of caring, sympathy, empathy, sharing of pleasure, mutual protection from danger and conflict resolution. *Homo sapiens* appears to have lost much of its evolutionary heritage--pain and warfare dominates; pleasure and love are subordinate. The evolution of love follows the same pathways, as does the evolution of morality. (jwp)

David Hume in *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739) stated: "There is implanted in the human mind a perception of pain and pleasure as the chief spring and moving principle of all actions"

Immanuel Kant in *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781) stated: "All our knowledge begins with the senses, proceeds then to the understanding, and ends with reason. There is nothing higher than reason"; and in *Perpetual Peace* (1795), stated: "With men, the state of nature is not a state of peace, but war".

Voltaire stated in the *Philosophical Dictionary* (1764): "Reason is, of all things in the world, the most hurtful to a reasoning human being. God only allows it to remain with those he intends to damn, and in his goodness takes it away from those he intends to save or render useful to the Church...If reason had any part in religion, what then would become of faith?"

Jean Jacques Rousseau in *"A Discourse on the Origin if Inequality"* (1754) stated: "It is by the activity of our passions that our reason is improved; for we desire knowledge only because we desire enjoyment, and it is impossible to conceive any reason why a person who has neither fears nor desires should give himself the trouble of reasoning....The habit of living together soon gave rise to the finest feelings known to humanity, conjugal love and paternal affection".

Hrdy (1999) in *Mother Nature* stated "...no wild monkey or ape mother has ever been observed to deliberately harm her own baby" (p.179)<sup>1</sup>. What has happened along the evolutionary trail that has made maternal violence in *homo sapiens* possible?

<sup>1</sup> Hrdy, S.B (1999). *Mother Nature A History of Mothers, Infants, and Natural Selection*. New York: Pantheon Books. <http://www.violence.de/prescott/reviews/hrdy.html>

Why has the Creator created a primate species, *homo sapiens*, that is uniquely capable of maternal violence against her offspring--behavior not seen in other feral primates? (jwp).