

Booklist

Advanced Review – Uncorrected Proof

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The Age of Empathy: Nature's Lessons for a Kinder Society.

de Waal, Frans (Author)

Sep 2009. 320 p. Harmony, hardcover, \$25.99. (9780307407764). 152.4.

Ethological primatologist de Waal insists that *H. sapiens* isn't *sui generis*, which is why we stand to learn things about ourselves as a species from studying other animals' behavior and development. For 30 years, he has worked to discover in apes and monkeys what are often considered specifically human qualities, such as kindness, moral discrimination, fairness, empathy, and sympathy. His illuminating description and explanation of his research have made progressively more magnetic reading (and viewing of the exceptionally illustrative photos and drawings) of eight previous books and don't fail him now. This time, however, he draws more than ever before on research on nonprimate species that indicates that the supposed human specifics mentioned above aren't primate exclusives. Rather, they are, in differing degree, traits of species that live in groups or societies. It is high time, de Waal says, for economics and politics to take into account what ethological research demonstrates—that greed and aggression are complemented and usually overmastered by cooperation, justice, and peacemaking in social species—and craft policy and law accordingly.

— *Ray Olson*