

Do Dolphins Carry the Cross Biological Moral Realism and Theological Ethics

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Introduction

In *Dependent Rational Animals* Alasdair MacIntyre advances the case for a realist account of the moral life over against the unsituated Enlightenment account of the good. The normative foundation of his proposal is narratives of the dependent rather than autonomous character of human existence from birth through childhood to old age and death, and analogies between human biological and emotional dependence, and child development, and the rich moral lives, and nurturing behaviours of dolphins and some other animals. This approach represents a significant revision of MacIntyre's earlier espousal of a principally Aristotelian – and hence heroic – account of the virtues. His setting of dependence as an ordering contingency of rationality brings him much closer to Christian narratives of the good life. The problem however with attempts to read off moral narratives from anthropological accounts of human embodied and social life, or from ethological narratives of other animals, is that they involve the attempt to found Christian theology and ethics on other than Christian foundations, and they therefore lack a true ontological foundation. In what follows I will suggest that narratives of the morality of embodiment, whether human or nonhuman, do find a legitimate place in Christian theological ethics but that this place is subject to the ordering narrative of the scriptures, and in particular the narratives of Christ crucified and risen. The narratives of the Incarnation, Crucifixion and Resurrection of Christ teach Christians to interpret dependence, embodiment, illness and even death, as aspects of biological existence which find correlates in the vulnerability of God. These narratives reframe biological fragility and relational dependence, the mortal limits of embodied creatureliness, revealing them to be not epiphenomenal but central to the truth of both the divine nature and of that nature as bodied forth in creatures. These narratives form the foundation for attempts by Christians to interpret the flourishing of embodied creatures, human and nonhuman.

The Moral Lives of Humans and Other Animals

A few years ago I was driving home with a good friend and former colleague at Edinburgh University after a walk in the Highlands. Juliette Vickery is a professional ornithologist and was discussing her research into foraging behaviour. Her then current research project involved drawing maps of foraging areas, using pieces of string to mark them out and observing the behaviour of individuals and groups of birds over long periods in exotic locations such as the Canary Isles and Kenya. By the end of it she believed she could account for the totality of the birds' behaviour in purely genetic terms, by which she meant that everything she observed of her birds' quest for protein for themselves and their progeny indicated to her that Richard Dawkins' metaphor of the 'selfish gene' was a true narration of the reality she was observing. In the remarkable efforts that the birds put into maximizing outcomes in their foraging behaviours the birds manifested the inbuilt DNA programming which orders them above all else to the project of sustaining and replicating their genes. As a selfish gene sceptic I asked whether the selfish gene metaphor might have shaped her observation methodology, data collection or analysis, a possibility which she rejected. I then talked about how the metaphor might be problematic in relation to humans, for we are after all animals as well, and if other animals mostly get along by behaving in the interests of the preservation of their genes there might be a danger that the scientific valorisation of such a description of other animals might affect human efforts to do things which are not evidently in the interests of their genes – providing publicly funded therapies to sustain the lives, even the children, of individuals with serious genetic disorders, or providing state assistance to people whose personal (or we might say genetic) contexts mean that they have not found gainful employment.¹ At this Juliette said, ah but then there is the 'spirit' bit: that makes us humans different, that's where morality comes in, so there is not a problem there.

I thought of this conversation when I came across John Gray's recent claim in *Straw Dogs* that humanism is as morally problematic, and scientifically outdated, as Christianity because 'it has not given up Christianity's cardinal error – the belief that humans are radically different from all other animals.'² This belief is responsible for the collective human illusion that 'mankind' can attain 'conscious mastery of his existence'. Philosophy, Gray avers, is about getting rid of such illusions and having, since the Middle Ages, served the illusory ideologies of Christianity and then humanism, philosophy is now 'a subject without a subject matter'.³ Philosophers are now free to get on with their real pre-Socratic business of 'unmasking illusions' and aiding

the 'struggle for truth'. This business will not bring peace or happiness – we may all become as miserable as Schopenhauer whom Gray admires, or even Gray – but it will be truth nonetheless.

Detailed examination of the record of Christianity with respect of animals reveals a somewhat more complex picture than the one Gray depicts which, for all his claims to the contrary, has the whiff of historicism about it – first Christianity was unmasked by Enlightenment philosophers, then humanism is unmasked by philosophers like Gray, aided by Wittgenstein and Rorty, and now at last philosophers are free to announce the liberating truth that humans are less different from other animals than they imagine. Keith Thomas in a richly documented study of attitudes towards animals and nature in Christian Europe observes that a tendency toward cruelty to animals and toward an exaltation of humanity's distinctively ensouled, rational and linguistic being over other animals is not evidenced in Britain and Europe until after the Renaissance and the Reformation. Indeed in the Middle Ages it was assumed not only that other animals had souls but also consciences and moral intents as evidenced in the occasional hanging of miscreant pigs, cows or horses, hung for crimes just like human beings.⁴

In *Dependent Rational Animals* Alasdair MacIntyre draws attention to the strong sense that Thomas Aquinas had of the common bonds of being which in many respects unite humans and other animals. In so doing MacIntyre owns that modern philosophers still have much to learn from Aquinas, who consistently referred to animals – unlike most modern philosophers, including Gray – as *other* animals, and many of whose insights into the nature of human as well as other animals are only now being unambiguously affirmed by scientific ethologists, who are the 'field anthropologists' of other animals.⁵

In many ways this most recent monograph of MacIntyre's is his best work of moral philosophy, and not least because he addresses, albeit indirectly, problems which others have found in his exaltation of the heroic Aristotelian virtues tradition in *After Virtue* and *Whose Justice, Which Rationality?*⁶ That Aristotle's account of the virtues, relying as it does on a tradition and a society characterised by militarism, seignorage, subjugation of women and slaves, is not the same as Aquinas' or St Paul's, and that it cannot serve as a proper basis for a Christian moral philosophy was just one of the problems raised for theologians by *After Virtue*. Another, and equally key, theological problem was the claim advanced in *After Virtue* that the normative foundation for moral behaviour, for the good life or human flourishing is the acquisition of goal-oriented practices which inculcate the virtues in individuals who dwell in narrative and tradition-formed communities. On MacIntyre's

account modern societies have lost their capacity to inculcate the virtues because the story they tell about human being and human flourishing is one of individual autonomy and subjective value adoption. Societies ordered by this story lack, or begin to lose, the capacity to authorise the kinds of rich and thick accounts of the virtues such as were sustained in predecessor, that is pre-enlightenment, tradition-bearing cultures. In consequence Western societies are now given over to the dominant narrative of managerial control which is the only set of practices which allows liberal states, and the market exchanges they promote, to get relatively autonomous individual value choosers – emoters – to live together, if not always peaceably. But if our forbears once knew, as moderns now do not, what were the kinds of behaviours and practices and goals which when followed led to human flourishing, how did they know this? Because they read Aristotle? Because they were rational readers of Aristotle? Or because they saw pictures of the lives of Christ and the saints on the walls of their churches, because they heard sermons and the gospels read in churches, because they prayed to a God who declared peacemakers and the poor blessed above rich and powerful warlords, because their spaces of worship and their lives were shaped by the cross and the resurrection, the God who was known on earth in the faithfulness and vulnerability of the crucified one, and in the vindication of (peaceable) goodness over (violent) evil in the Resurrection?

If MacIntyre ever considers this question, he does not show evidence of it in his writings. If there is a subject of MacIntyre's philosophy it is surely Aristotle's virtue ethics, and secondarily, Marx with his critiques of the market, property arrangements, power and managerialism; it is not the moral claims and practices of the Christian tradition, even although this is clearly one, perhaps even the only one, of the predecessor cultures towards which his longing for 'another Benedict' points. This holds true however only until the publication of *Dependent Rational Animals*. With this book things change significantly because now, in his uses of Aquinas, of studies of dolphins and dogs, chimpanzees and gorillas, and of accounts of human embodiment, human dependence and fragility, MacIntyre moves much closer to the Christian moral narrative. How so?

First, because he allows Aquinas to revise Aristotle's account of practical reasoning in quite radical ways, which are connected with Aquinas' narrative of being as embodied, a narrative which arises from Aquinas' theology of redemption as well as his account of creation. Scripture is still not referred to in this book but indirectly, through Aquinas, a scriptural narration of created and embodied life does begin to exercise a stronger influence on MacIntyre's moral philosophy.

Second MacIntyre develops his account of human consciousness and

moral and practical reasoning with reference to a rich site of moral normativity which Christians affirm that God has unambiguously made, and marked as creator, this being the relational, communicative, and even moral, world of embodied mammalian life. MacIntyre, as a professor of philosophy in North America with its strong separation of Church and State, may still not want to read, or be seen to read, scripture when he writes his philosophy but he has at least brought himself to read the other great book of God, the book of God's works, in just the way that theologians once did, and are beginning to do again.

Third MacIntyre in this work radically revises his former reliance on a heroic Aristotelian account of the virtues with the concept of the moral priority of dependence, vulnerability and weakness. In this way MacIntyre comes much closer to the Christian account of the moral priority of the weak, and the overcoming of the power of evil by non-violent goodness. However for Christians this account, and its practice in their communities, rests upon faith in Christ crucified and risen, for it is through the 'folly of the Cross' and the vindication of the resurrection that embodied vulnerability and weakness are divinely exalted as the means to overcoming evil and redeeming creation. But MacIntyre fails to acknowledge the significance of the Christian narrative of redemption in shaping communities which acknowledge dependence and hence give a special place to the weak and the vulnerable. He argues that such communities – whether found among humans or other animals – are biologically determined to this acknowledgement and that it finds expression in reciprocal networks of care, or gift exchange. Consequently MacIntyre misses crucial features of the moral life of many of the predecessor cultures he lauds, and their sustaining of local communities in which the weak and vulnerable were morally considerable. But before moving to critique I will give a fuller analysis of the work.

Acknowledging Dependence

MacIntyre's account falls into three sets of theses. The first concern dependency, animality and embodiment. For significant periods of time, as children, in sickness, and in old age, human life involves the experience of dependence. For disabled individuals this dependence may be for more extended periods. It is through such relationships of dependence that humans acquire the skills which enable them to become mature individuals, and in particular the skill of practical reasoning, the capacity to choose between courses of action and to respond or not to the promptings of different desires. Dependence is a consequence of being embodied, and is therefore something which humans share with other

animals. But many philosophers have failed to see this, and as a consequence they not only misconstrue the nature of nonhuman animals, but also misconstrue crucial features of human being. It was because Descartes failed to understand the significance of embodiment for consciousness that he could argue that humans know about the feelings of others, and their own feelings, only by inference and that therefore, since they do not have powers of inference, nonhuman animals are merely machines which do not feel pain, either on their own behalf or on that of others. Against Cartesian speciesism, MacIntyre shows that dolphins, and some other animals, rely on social knowledge expressed through various forms of embodied communication for their survival.⁷ Dolphins are also, like humans, goal-directed animals who recognise a number of goods – such as child rearing, communication, skill in hunting, play, and sociability – and are able to choose between them. Dolphins are therefore capable of elements of what humans call practical reasoning, and, though they do not have a language which humans can recognise, they are clearly capable of entertaining and being moved by concepts, or ‘precepts’. Humans when they are infants are themselves incapable of entertaining reasons for making choices. It is precisely through their dependent interaction on others who are more capable in the matter of making choices, and controlling desires, that children develop capacities to entertain concepts which guide their behaviours and order their desires. And so any clear line between (non-linguistic) animals and humans in the matter of reasoning skills is not philosophically defensible.

Humans are however distinguished from most other animals in the extent to which they are capable of misperceiving their own goods, of responding in disordered ways to their desires, and for this reason, and because of the complexity of the goods which humans are ordered towards and their creative potentialities in realising them, humans have particularly strong needs to develop capacities to reason and argue with themselves and others if they are to find flourishing. The training of humans in such capacities itself requires virtues in those – parents and teachers – who have the responsibility of training dependent humans into adulthood. And this is why humans have a biological need for the virtues, and why acknowledged dependence is central to flourishing, MacIntyre’s second principal thesis. Children need mothers who can express unconditional regard – love – for them and they also need parents who can model and teach them to temper or condition desire, to stand back from their bodily needs and loves, and to consider their appropriateness; they need in other words temperate parents if they are to learn temperance. Children who have begun to have reasons for their actions

and to choose between them are the kind of children who in turn will be teachable by others, and who will go on to become adults who are capable of temperance, and hence able, in examples MacIntyre gives, to resist addictive behaviours in the form of eating disorders or excessive acquisition of consumer goods.⁸ The individual who is able to recognize in her practices 'what goods are at stake in this or that particular situation and what the threats to them are and to find in those goods premises for an argument whose conclusion will be a just action' is an individual who exhibits 'the kind of responsiveness that characterizes the virtues'.⁹ Such responsiveness is inculcated in relationships with both teachers and parents who themselves are capable of modelling as well as teaching the virtues to maturing young adults. Becoming a mature adult, an independent practical reasoner, relies then upon a chain of relationships and experiences of community. And being an adult does not mean become completely independent of others. On the contrary the virtuous individual, the individual who is capable of experiencing flourishing, is an individual who is capable of living in the context of acknowledged dependencies on others. For no individual is capable of infallible moral judgement and others may often be better judges of an individual's good in particular circumstances than they are themselves. The acknowledgement of dependence for adults as well as children is therefore a vital corrective to the post-enlightenment (and market oriented) account of the autonomous individual as practical reasoner. And hence relational embodiment is central to a proper account of consciousness, of moral judgement and of psychological development.

The third set of theses that MacIntyre develops concern the kinds of social arrangements and conceptions of the common good which human beings need if they are to realise both the virtues of rational independence and acknowledged dependence. The family is the core social unit in which the experience of dependence both in childhood and old age has traditionally been matched with other persons who are able and willing to offer nurture and care. Humans experience family life as a network of relationships in which at different times duties and dependencies are experienced so that 'each of us achieves our good only if and insofar as others make our good their good by helping us through periods of disability to become ourselves the kind of human being – through acquisition and exercise of the virtues – who makes the good of others her or his good'.¹⁰ The problem we face in contemporary society however is that communities of care and nurture, and especially the family unit, are infected by market relationships which tend to 'undermine and corrupt communal ties'.¹¹ But even market relationships presuppose norms of giving and receiving and therefore ride upon

'certain types of local non-market relationships'. The consequence is that when market relationships become overly dominant both market and non-market relations become alienated, with 'on the one hand a romantic and sentimental overvaluation of feeling as such, on the other a reduction of human activity to economic activity'.¹²

Nation states and markets rely upon 'a politics of competing interest' whereas certain kinds of local community, and even communities of dolphins and simians, involve 'networks of giving and receiving' which are institutionalized in social arrangements, traditions and learned behaviours. The politics of these communities are such that 'the basic political question is what resources each individual and group needs, if it is to make its particular contribution to the common good'.¹³ If such communities are not to be destroyed by markets and nation states with their competitive conceptions of politics and exchanges then it is important that moral and social considerations are not subordinated to those of economic exchange or of statist attempts to do the kinds of things that only such local communities can do if the common good, understood in these relational and communitarian terms, is not to be undermined. And it is possible to discern the extent to which communities or societies have successfully resisted these subordinations or subversions in the extent to which their members recognise and are prepared to respond to the needs of children, the sick and the disabled.

The Cruciformity of Communities of Acknowledged Dependence

Despite the cogency and clarity of MacIntyre's principal theses they raise a number of problems for the theologian, as I have already hinted. Principal among these is the failure to acknowledge the theological shape of the virtues, and of dependence, despite the reliance on Aquinas' account of the virtues. In a recent work on St Paul's narrative appropriation of the cross in the New Testament, Michael Gorman suggests that Paul's account of the virtues of faith, hope and love, and of Christian community as the body of Christ, are both deeply marked by the cruciform shape which Paul finds in the narrative of Christ's life, death and resurrection.¹⁴ And from this narrative also arises the Christian understanding of the moral priority of the weak. This understanding is particularly manifest in the narrative of political power which St Paul gives in his modelling of the polity of the body of Christ in 1 Corinthians 12 – 14, a polity in which the strong give greater honour to the weak than they would receive in imperial and pagan societies.

The moral priority of the weak also finds significant expression in the rapid establishment by the first Christians of practices which gave

priority to the poor, widows, orphans, the sick and to children. Collections were held for the poor regularly and often in the earliest Christian churches, deacons were set aside in the first church in Jerusalem to care for the widows and orphans, the sick were visited and hands were laid on them. If we perceive the cruciform shape of Christian spirituality we can see that it is no coincidence that wherever Christianity as a religious culture has spread in the world it has established hospitals, schools, and other institutional structures in which the young, the weak, the sick and the vulnerable are cared for. MacIntyre laments the demise of such institutional arrangements and priorities under the force of the narratives of competitive individualism sustained by the modern nation state and the growing influence of economic market exchanges in consumer societies. But he does not seem to countenance the possibility that the demise of such arrangements – for example the parlous state of health and welfare provision in the United States where disability or chronic illness are the single biggest causes of bankruptcy and long term poverty – might be connected with the declining influence, in the face of the commercialism of the American dream, of the narrative of Jesus Christ crucified, and in particular the cruciform shape that this narrative once gave to the politics of local communities.¹⁵

The judgement that the demise of the social power of the narrative of Christ crucified might help to explain the commodification of health and social care, the rise of extreme inequality in Britain and America, and the related narratives of poverty as deserved and wealth as beatitude, is given substance for me by the experience of living and working in Malaysia in the 1980s. Malaysia is an Islamic country with deep and long standing Hindu and Chinese heritages. The Malaysian year is marked, perhaps uniquely so, by public holidays for all the principal Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, Chinese and Christian religious festivals and these festivals are themselves occasion for a tradition of hospitality or 'open house' among neighbours and friends of other faiths during such festivals. However when it comes to the care of the disabled, the chronically ill, the sick and the education of children Christianity has an influence which far outweighs its small minority position in the country. This influence can only partially be explained by the colonial inheritance. Yes, missionaries established schools and hospitals under the aegis of the British but it is only since Independence in 1957 that many institutions for the care of drug addicts, disabled people, schools for young people with learning or behavioural disorders have been established by Christian churches and individuals, and in particular by a remarkable organisation founded by an Anglican priest called Malaysian Care. The disproportionate role of Christians – who are less than 10 per cent of the population of West

Malaysia – in the provision and institutionalisation of care for the dependent would seem to be a mark of the distinctive narrative and values which the Christian tradition sustains. Muslims, I discovered when I lived among them, are deeply suspicious of the Christian rhetoric of weakness as displayed in beatitudes such as ‘blessed are the meek’ ‘blessed are the poor’, and in the narratives of the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ. Muslim theology has always resisted the idea that Christ actually, physically died on the cross, preferring instead the account that Christ only appeared to die, that his uniquely divine nature never truly succumbed to its grip, and that Christ’s Resurrection appearances were therefore continuous with Christ’s bodily life rather than evidences of a post-death event. The result is that in my experience public Islamic culture has a problem with the dependent and the vulnerable. Islam has no narrative of sin, and no narrative of the cross: vulnerability, weakness, biological dependence, do not find any clear locus in Muslim theology and practice.

MacIntyre uses as the normative base for his repristination of the virtues his account of relationships of nurture and care in families and local communities. And he uses the biological display of such communities even beyond human experience to point to their truthfulness for all animals which are capable of practical reasoning. However for Christians the objective reality of the story Christians tell about the embodied world rests upon an account of Jesus Christ, Incarnate, Crucified and Risen, because Christ *is* the Lord of the cosmos, the hidden key of the universe. While we only know this key through the story of the dying and rising God and man who is Jesus Christ it is still the key to created order, to the obdurate but gloriously meaningful and morally charged reality of animality – of brains, bodies, fragile and mortal flesh, networks of care, the nurturing of children – which gives real, rather than imagined shape to human life and human apprehensions of what it is that we mean when we talk about the real. To put this another way, there is according to St Paul an important fit between the book of God’s works and the book of God’s words. Scripture is not the only place where Christians encounter divine reality. The scriptures, and in particular the narratives of Christ’s life, death and resurrection, speak of a world which we already encounter, but they make its hidden meaning known. Stanley Hauerwas seems to resist this claim because he believes it leads to a reliance on natural law arguments which are analogous to Enlightenment rationalism and its coercive but ultimately illusory claims to universalism.¹⁶ If there is a way to read off God’s nature from God’s works other than through the story of Jesus Christ, and its apprehension and performance by peaceable Christian communities, then the peaceable

kingdom is trounced by the coercive, and therefore violent, claims of universal rhetorics of natural lawyers such as Reinhold Niebuhr or Jacques Maritain.

Is this then what we have in MacIntyre's reading of modern ethological and ethnographic accounts of dolphins, of the nurture of children and of care for the physically or mentally disabled? Do these accounts provide us with a way to read off from God's works their real meaning, the true nature of flourishing, the ends which we are in our innermost being, and in our bodies, ordered to realise? I do not believe so, because MacIntyre says he could not have got where he gets without Aquinas' theological account of the virtues.¹⁷ And these virtues, though MacIntyre does not publicly own this, are only knowable for Christians, and realisable in their lives, through their communal and individual shaping by the narratives of Christ crucified and risen, through their celebration of the sacraments in which Christ is really present to them in their worship, and through the performance of lives which are shaped by the Spirit who is the pro-genitor of what Aquinas called the virtues, what St Paul called the fruit of the Spirit, in their lives.¹⁸ Indeed the core meanings of the theological or cardinal virtues for Aquinas and Paul would seem to involve worship: to have faith that God is the author of all things, hope that God is restoring all things to their original ordering to God, and love of God and of God's works because they are revealed as loveable in the God who becomes one with them in Jesus Christ, what else can we call these than worship?

So what do Christians make of anthropological and animal moralities which seem to display many of the features of the virtues, even as these have been recast by Aquinas? Well as I have argued elsewhere such accounts may be said to point us to the vestigial marks of a prelapsarian social which we may still encounter in those human and mammalian communities that have not given themselves up so fully to the law of sin and death, violence and domination, as have the ancient and modern empires of human history.¹⁹ Could we then have anticipated what we learn from the cross without Christ; could Christians without the cruciform shape of Christ's life have formed communities which through history have mostly, though by no means consistently, shown a greater concern for the disabled, the sick, the poor, the weak than the empires in which those communities were set? In one sense the answer is simple. No. Because we are fallen and the Fall is displayed in our own culture in the extent to which modernity is only in part a story of the secularisation of Christianity's best moral impulses; it is also a story of their gradual erosion and decay, their supplanting with other more coercive narrations both within Christian history and beyond it. Despite the cogency of

ethological work on dolphins and other animals, the dominant story that modern scientists tell about animal and other forms of life is a story which runs something along the lines of Dawkins' 'selfish gene' narrative. This narrative, when it infects the human social as inevitably it does, tends to legitimate precisely the kinds of contractual and coercive human institutional arrangements which are doing so much to subvert and undermine the ethic of public service and forms of gift exchange which the nurture of children, care for the sick, the elderly, and the disabled traditionally represented.²⁰

We can though put this question in another way and ask "do dolphins sin?"²¹ Do Dolphins consistently fail to realise their flourishing, do they fight wars with other dolphin groups, become addicted to destructive behaviour patterns, go off and live in isolated indifference to the rest of their kin, reject their responsibilities as parents? Well the evidence seems to be that Dolphins do these kinds of things to a far lesser extent than humans and some other animals. This is not to say that they do not suffer at all from the effects of sin, and of course these effects are experienced by Dolphins more in their relations with humans than they are in their relations with one another. Their lives around the shores of Britain and in many other parts of the world have never been so threatened as they are currently as a consequence of the pervasive spread of industrial fishing methods throughout the deep ocean.

Do Dolphins then stand in need of redemption? Well yes. Do dolphins carry the cross? Well clearly no, they do not carry crosses, they have not heard the gospel, they do not, so far as we know, have the concept or imaginary God.²² But do they reveal, do they share in the hidden meaning of reality which the cross shows forth, and are they exemplars of the moral priority of the weak? Well yes. They are. The Psalmist says that all the creatures of the deep take part in the collective praise which is the unwitting response of the whole creation to its creator so the hidden meaning of reality, that God is the world's creator and sustainer and intends its good, is affirmed by dolphins. And we can say more than this for the ethologists have now shown us that the dolphins' unwittingness with regard to God is much less pervasive in other aspects of their creaturehood than it is say in trees or lizards. Hence they are much closer to those human capacities which enable us to nurture one another, and especially when we are vulnerable, through gifts of care and through the acknowledgement of dependence. And that is why Christians should love dolphins, and might even spend time watching them on dolphin-watching excursions. They are in their exuberant playfulness, and richly communicative and intelligent lives, exemplars of a generous God who shared godlike qualities of community and intelligence well

beyond those whom the Christian tradition has traditionally said were exclusively made in the image of God. We may say then in affirming these qualities in dolphins that they are particularly powerful exemplars of what John Howard Yoder calls 'the cruciformity of the cosmos'. In other words dolphins show us that an account of the real which takes its rise from the narratives of Christ's life, death and resurrection is an account which can make better sense of biological and social reality than either an Aristotelian revisionist such as MacIntyre or a genetic determinist such as Dawkins.²³

Christians who own that dolphins reveal aspects of the cruciform shape of biological and social reality will also wish to shun foods gotten at the expense of the casual destruction of this wondrously rich exemplar of God's created order, and in particular those three mile long nets of death which deep sea trawlers drag through the oceans and which take so many dolphins to their deaths in the inexorable quest of the narrative of modern managerialism for cheaper, more economically efficient harvests from the ocean. Patience and temperance are virtues which are both key to the nurture and community of dependent rational animals. But these are virtues which corporate and government sponsored technologies have made sadly scarce in modern deep sea fishing. And it is dolphins and porpoises, which are so close to humans in many aspects of their flourishing, which are the victims of this lack of virtue amongst modern fishfolk.

- 1 A danger which Richard Dawkins recognizes in *The Selfish Gene* (London: Penguin, 1976). See also the philosophical welcome given to the selfish gene hypothesis in J. L. Mackie's 'The law of the jungle', *Philosophy* 53 (1978) and Mary Midgley's critique, 'Gene-Juggling' in Ashley Montagu (ed.), *Sociobiology Examined* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980).
- 2 John Gray, *Straw Dogs: Thoughts on Humans and Other Animals* (London: Granta Books, 2002), p. 37.
- 3 Gray, *Straw Dogs*, p. 82.
- 4 Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World* (London: Penguin, 1986). And see also my discussion of this issue in Michael S Northcott, *The Environment and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 55 – 7.
- 5 Alasdair MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals: Why Human Beings Need the Virtues* (London: Duckworth, 1999), pp. 6 – 8. See also the account of ethological methods and insights in my *Environment and Christian Ethics*, pp. 209 – 215.
- 6 See for example John Milbank's critique of MacIntyre in his *Theology and Social Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), pp. 327 – 332.
- 7 MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, p. 22.
- 8 MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, pp. 87 – 89.

- 9 MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, p. 92.
- 10 MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, p. 108.
- 11 MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, p. 117.
- 12 MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, pp. 117-8.
- 13 MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, pp. 143 – 4.
- 14 Michael J. Gorman, *Cruciformity: Paul's Narrative Spirituality of the Cross* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001).
- 15 To the extent that philosophy in America is practiced as a public academic discourse, and religion is understood as a private and personal discourse or set of practices, we may be able to account for MacIntyre's silence on the doctrinal, liturgical and scriptural mediation of the theological virtues in Aquinas.
- 16 Though in his foreword to Craig A. Carter, *The Politics of the Cross: The Theology and Social Ethics of John Howard Yoder* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2001) Hauerwas declares that, however he may have been read or misread by his friends and others, he 'shares Yoder's realism': 'Foreword' in Carter, *Politics of the Cross*, p. 10.
- 17 In their review of *Dependent Rational Animals* Don Browning and Alexander Campbell claim that it contains no reference to religion or Christianity. But of course in his reliance on Aquinas, as well as on modern ethologists and feminist philosophers, MacIntyre does indeed reveal a substantial debt to a Christian narrative of the world. But despite MacIntyre's recent conversion to Roman Catholicism, this debt is still under-acknowledged in his work: Don Browning and Alexander Campbell, 'Dependent Rational Animals: Why Human Beings Need the Virtues: The Philosophy of MacIntyre', *Christian Century*, May 17, 2000, pp. 580-1.
- 18 Galatians 5. 22 – 24.
- 19 *Environment and Christian Ethics*, pp. 174-9.
- 20 Amitai Etzioni argues that the 'parenting deficit' which characterises late modern societies is a consequence of the corrupting invasiveness of market relations into other forms of human relationship and community including the family: Amitai Etzioni, *The Parenting Deficit* (London: Demos 1993).
- 21 For a more extensive discussion of the question of biology and sin see Stephen Clark, *Biology and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).
- 22 We probably can never know the answer to this question. The level of knowledge scientists now have of dolphin communication is such, according to MacIntyre, that we may reasonably judge that if we could interpret it we would actually know what they meant whereas he concurs with Wittgenstein that we can be less certain of this with regard to lions, and certainly with regard to bats: *Dependent Rational Animals*, pp. 58 – 9.
- 23 John Howard Yoder, 'The hermeneutics of peoplehood' cited Carter, *The Politics of the Cross*, p. 69. See also W. von Loewenich, *Luther's Theology of the Cross*, transl. Herbert J.A. Bouman (Belfast: Christian Journals, 1976).