



Celia  
Deane-Drummond

# Deep History, Amnesia, and Animal Ethics: A Case for Inter-Morality

Celia Deane-Drummond

*This article builds the case for an alternative theological anthropology that takes seriously the deep evolutionary history of human beings, including relationships with other species. I draw on a case study that engages the work of anthropologists interested in interspecies relations, focusing particularly on human-hyena associations in Harar, Ethiopia. I argue, in particular, for a perspective that not only acknowledges the entanglement between humans and other animals historically, but that also argues that the emergence of human morality is profoundly “inter-morality,” that is, first, insofar as it is interlaced with the actions of and interactions with other animals, and second, in that some of such actions of other animals could be termed moral according to their own worlds. I suggest that appropriation of such concepts shifts theological anthropology that has, in the past, relied far too heavily on a philosophy of human exceptionalism. The approach suggested here also opens up the possibility of an alternative approach to animal ethics, one that is far less reliant on an extension of human rights to other animals.*

Keri McFarlane’s article “Living Relationally with Creation: Animals and Christian Faith” raises important issues about human distinctiveness that grounds much of the key literature in philosophy and anthropology that takes other animals seriously.<sup>1</sup> It addresses significant questions from a Christian theological perspective, including, for example, How are humans and animals distinct? In what ways are humans also animals? What does divine image bearing mean? Do other animals have a capacity for consciousness? Do animals have rights? How do humans treat other animals? What practical purposes are animals used for? and Are these uses ever ethically justified? Particularly important in my view, because it is so often ignored, is the question, What about the sheer variety of animal life? Taking the latter into account will impinge not only on our perception of animals in relation to humans, but also on our treatment of them.

What I intend to do in this essay is a little different insofar as it takes McFarlane’s article as background to the discussion. I will presuppose some familiarity with the issues that she raises, while offering more details on the ethical implications of a theological anthropology that *does* take the presence of other animals seriously. I therefore offer ingredients for an alternative theological anthropology that argues for what I term “inter-morality” as a significant aspect of that anthropology, along with some brief pointers for our actual treatment of other animals, what is traditionally termed “animal ethics.”

The pressing question for many traditional theologians seeking to build a theological anthropology grounded in

**Celia Deane-Drummond** is a professor in theology at the University of Notre Dame. Her most recent books are *The Wisdom of the Liminal: Evolution and Other Animals in Human Becoming* (Eerdmans, 2014) and *Re-Imaging the Divine Image: Humans and Other Animals* (Pandora Press, 2014).

# Article

## *Deep History, Amnesia, and Animal Ethics: A Case for Inter-Morality*

the idea of humans made in the divine image seems to be a comparative one, that is, how are humans *distinctive* or even *unique*, as compared with animals? In order to argue the case for human exceptionalism, they consider each humanly distinctive characteristic in turn and find that humans have relatively greater capacities for reason and intelligence, consciousness, and language. Consequently, other animals, even highly social and intelligent animals, are found not to measure up. The boundary between humans and other animals may be more porous than we once thought, but when placed on a scale of our own making, human superiority remains intact.

Yet, as I have argued in far more detail in a monograph that develops an alternative theological anthropology and approach to divine image bearing, our ability as human beings to make such comparisons at all is itself the product of a particular approach to ourselves and other animals that is shaped by a specific cultural history, namely that in the post-Enlightenment West.<sup>2</sup> That is not to deny that we can escape from our cultural history, but it is important to recognize it. So, just as Charles Taylor and Alasdair MacIntyre bemoan the intellectual landscape of contemporary culture as somehow having lost touch with the rich intellectual tradition of the past, leaving in its place only fragments of what it had been,<sup>3</sup> so, too, I suggest that we have lost touch with any awareness of alternative ways of perceiving human flourishing, other than the post-Enlightenment tradition that puts a great deal of stress on human rationality.

MacIntyre attempted to fill that void not only by retrieving Aristotelian approaches to tradition-based practices, but also, in subsequent work, by taking into account the dependency of human beings that aligns with the dependency in other animal worlds; thus humans are also considered *dependent* as well as rational animals.<sup>4</sup> However, this does not go nearly far enough. If we are like other animals just because we are also dependent on each other, that still puts those animals in the role of teaching us something important about ourselves and our vulnerabilities, but it does not necessarily change our treatment of them.

Another highly significant philosopher, Jacques Derrida, who has influenced many writers in animal studies in one of the most important books he has

written, *The Animal That Therefore I Am (Following)*, at least recognized that to be human could not be understood in isolation from our interaction with other animals, but he too failed to take specific account of what those animals are really like in any rich sense. Finding that we are ashamed, as Derrida clearly did, when we are stark naked in the presence of a cat might seem odd to us if that cat was, as centuries of philosophical reflection claimed, not a conscious being like us. But how are we to know what that sense of shame actually means? Derrida does not investigate this other than claiming that it raises issues about who we are. In a provocative passage, he states:

If I say “it is a real cat” that sees me naked, this is in order to mark its unsubstitutable singularity. When it responds in its name (whatever “respond” means, and that will be our question), it doesn’t do so as the exemplar of a species called “cat,” even less so of an “animal” genus or kingdom. It is true that I identify it as a male or female cat. But even before that identification, it comes to me as this irreplaceable living being that one day enters my space, into this place where it can encounter me, see me, even see me naked. Nothing can ever rob me of the certainty that what we have here is an existence that refuses to be conceptualized [*rebelle à tout concept*].<sup>5</sup>

Then there is a shame at being ashamed, a double shame felt in the absence of that cat, when the actual experience of encounter is no longer so clear. What possible reason can we have for being ashamed in the cat’s presence? But Derrida relies on his own existential experience to promote his reflections, against a literary and philosophical background, rather than taking into account what it is *actually* like to be a living biological being, a *cat*.

The recent philosophical turn to questioning human identity through encounters with other animals, along with a wider interest in animal studies and recognition of a common evolutionary history, has had an impact on systematic theology. Prominent theologians, such as David Fergusson, are beginning to argue that image bearing as a focal point for anthropology is now redundant, or at least needs to be deflated.<sup>6</sup> I can understand the urge by theologians to trim back on *imago* language, influenced perhaps by other powerful thinkers such as Protestant theologian David Kelsey, whose major work on theological

anthropology deliberately refrained from the use of this language.<sup>7</sup>

Kelsey's reasoning was somewhat different, however, since he is arguing not so much from a self-conscious awareness of the importance of other animals, but from the historical perception of image bearing. For him, *imago Dei* carries with it a historical premodern anthropology that stressed the rational soul and the denigration of the body, in which the rational soul seems more God-like compared with the body.<sup>8</sup> He also presses the case that the only justifiable use of the "image of God" applies to Jesus Christ in his personal identity. So, for him, the image of God, when used for theological anthropology, draws with it an unacceptably univocal narrative about creation, the Fall, and redemption.<sup>9</sup> In a section entitled "Against the Tradition," Kelsey seeks to complexify that narrative by drawing on scripture in a different way, according to three narratives that are interwoven with each other, using the biological analogy of the triple helix. Thus, he deliberately avoids using the concept of *imago* in order for an alternative to emerge, in which the *imago* (he finds it hard to completely avoid that term) is sharpened, deepened, and complexified in a way that resists a drive to systematize human existence, "which is a 'mystery' in part just because it is not 'a system.'"<sup>10</sup>

My own view, however, is that image bearing is far too strong a motif to be dispensed with by theologians in the name of a more mysterious account, and that more traction can be found by deliberately seeking to name and reimage that image. Yes, I agree with Kelsey that there is a need to complexify the term, and yes, there is a need to resist too strident systematization. And yes, too, wisdom is critically important as a source of biblical literature for anthropology. However, the complexifications that Kelsey fails to take seriously enough are those related to human entanglements with other creatures, including those in deep history, so taking evolutionary biology into account.<sup>11</sup>

## Animal Ethnography and Interspecies Relations

So far I have not mentioned the detailed observations of animal ethologists such as Marc Bekoff,<sup>12</sup> or that of primatologist Frans de Waal, both of whom have

made deliberate efforts to make their work more widely known, including, in de Waal's case, books such as *Good Natured or The Age of Empathy*.<sup>13</sup> Frans de Waal's research supports literature that makes the human/animal differences more porous, thus challenging strong calls for human uniqueness; so, in this sense, he is still operating under the same sort of paradigm that I mentioned in the first section. In other words, he is prepared for other primates to be considered in their sociality as having specific capacities, such as those for altruistic acts, but he leaves the idea of a graded scale intact. Humans are at the top of a "tower of morality," even if less triumphantly so. This is unfortunate, in my view, since, as I suggested earlier, and in spite of de Waal's protestations to the contrary, it leaves the option of human abuse of animals intact.

There are no reasons, other than purely naturalistic ones, why humans should necessarily imitate other primates or see in their behavior some sort of guide for human practices. For the moment, I want to point out that de Waal's work, for all its benefits in terms of public awareness of the rich emotional lives of other primates, fails, inasmuch as it does not address the root of the problem: How do humans orientate themselves in relation to other animals? Therefore, while de Waal has offered a successful riposte to simplistic accounts of morality that perceive human beings as, in some sense, essentially selfish, which quality is then regulated by the imposition of moral control—a position that he terms "veneer theory"—his own position is not all that much better. All he has done is to replace the essentially selfish human nature, which is grounded in more limited versions in other animals, with an essentially cooperative one. Humans are just that bit more cooperative rather than that bit more selfish; thus, they do not need another layer added onto an otherwise brutish nature.

The above raises all sorts of complex issues about what human nature is actually like and what the term human nature really means. I am not intending to get too distracted by the considerable body of literature in analytical philosophy that is starting to focus on this topic in a modern context.<sup>14</sup> It is sufficient to mention that just as image bearing has remained a controversial topic among theologians, so human nature is similarly disputed among philosophers. In this respect, Jonathan Jong and Aku Visala's topography of the term is helpful inasmuch

# Article

## *Deep History, Amnesia, and Animal Ethics: A Case for Inter-Morality*

as contemporary discussion about human nature takes the form of (a) universal claims, (b) claims for uniqueness, and (c) the quest for innateness. When the term “human being” is used, scientists, however, often assume that what is intended is the species, *Homo sapiens*, and human being becomes a biological category. Changing the term to “persons” does not necessarily help either, since the category of personhood is now tentatively being applied to other animals.<sup>15</sup>

Such theoretical considerations do not yet engage with the way that humans and other animals are richly entangled in many societies in a much more obvious way compared with our own. Of course, even Western cultures are entangled with other animals; it is just that we rarely notice what is going on, and reflecting on other cases can perhaps jolt us out of amnesia. I suggest that it is this that is particularly important when considering how human perceptions of other animals can change. Knowing that there is a naturalistic basis for kindness as well as selfishness, in the manner that de Waal suggests, will not change behavior, especially when we consider that human acts of altruism have the capacity to be deliberate and sustained rather than to be responses of the moment, as seems to be the case in other primate societies.<sup>16</sup> However fascinating these marks of human ultrasensitivity may be to our own sense of identity, humans still end up with a sense that we are, in comparative terms, superior. Now, I am not suggesting that such narratives about interspecies interrelations can substitute for actual experiential contact between humans and other animals as a way of enlarging our understanding, but at least they open up a world that is worth considering, for it starts to shift the discussion away from simply how are we different? to how are we connected *horizontally* rather than vertically? and what might be the significance of those connections?

As many biologists are aware, if we look back to the deepest history of all, to the dawn of multicellular life, it is clear that the organisms from which we are made are hybrid rather than simple. The mitochondria in every living cell once had an existence independent from our bodies, and the bacteria that inhabit our intestines are necessary for healthy existence. The biology of symbiosis is fascinating, and reminding ourselves of this mixed bodily history is an important acknowledgment of entanglement.

The transfer of parasites from one host to another can also have an impact on human/animal relations: as the Ebola virus illustrated, once in humans the pathogenicity can look very different.<sup>17</sup> The point is that the human/animal association works for both health and disease, leading to a complex intertwining of hosts, pathogens, and symbionts in the interspecies world.

How do such symbiotic relationships arise? There are literally dozens of examples of interspecies relationships in which there is mutuality in the way each species has evolved. Where there is particularly close contact, it is called “coevolution.” But there are examples of close entanglements that can be witnessed by anthropologists studying human-animal associations. So striking are these interrelationships that anthropologists are beginning to use the methodology normally reserved for the study of human populations to observe and record that of other animals that are in close association with them. The results are remarkable. Agustin Fuentes, for example, has pressed for a new field of ethnoprimateology. Further, this research is not simply of armchair importance, but has significant ethical implications. Fuentes argues:

Ethnoprimateology, the combining of primatological and anthropological practice and the viewing of humans and other primates as living in integrated and shared ecological and social spaces, is becoming an increasingly popular approach to primate studies in the twenty-first century. This approach plays a core linking role between anthropology and primate studies and may enable us to more effectively assess, and better understand, the complex ecologies and potential for sustainability in human–other primate communities.<sup>18</sup>

But primates are relatively easy to imagine as having some sort of association with human societies. Elephants also have a long history of association with humans, thus leading to an emergent ethnoelephantology as well. So, Piers Locke discusses

continuities between the sentient and affective lifeworlds of humans and elephants, the mutual entanglements of their social, historical, and ecological relations, and the relevance of combining social and natural science methodologies.<sup>19</sup>

The point is that the tools characteristically used by the social sciences and the natural sciences are

directed to a problem, a shared natural-cultural contact zone between two different species that are living in close proximity and so influencing their life worlds and evolutionary histories.

## Deep History of Entanglements: A Case Study of Humans and Hyenas in Harar, Ethiopia

Most striking of all is the even deeper history of human contact with hyenas. I am going to cover this in some detail here as a case study, since the rich texture of this ethnographic work becomes much clearer once attention is given to the details of the way humans and hyenas interact in this particular case. Australian anthropologist Marcus Baynes-Rock has done some fascinating work in what he terms the “multispecies commons” between humans and hyenas in the Muslim town of Harar in Ethiopia. He describes in great detail a dramatic chain of events after a hyena became poisoned near the house owned by a local Muslim resident called Yusuf, who took charge of feeding publicly the hyenas from a particular clan. At first the dying hyena attracted the attention of the local people, who tried matches, smoke from burning rags, lime, milk, and other attempts to revive the hyena. Eventually, however, “the large female picked up the hyena in her mouth and marched off into the darkness with him. She was followed by thirty-one other hyenas, growling and whooping, their manes and tails bristling.”<sup>20</sup> But rather than leave it at that, the hyenas returned to the place where they had found the hyena the day before. Baynes-Rock notes,

On the second night after the above incident, there was some unusual activity at the place outside Yusuf’s house. One hyena was uttering a series of low groans while the other hyenas present were agitated. They were scratching at the ground and gathering around at various places, sniffing together.<sup>21</sup>

A few minutes later about six hyenas arrived at the normal gathering space of hyenas on one of the Harar city wall gates known as the Argobberi gate, and appeared in an aggressive relationship with a group of other hyenas, the human observers leaving the area for this exchange to take place.

Baynes-Rock unravels the puzzles of the behavior he observes by considering the social and biologi-

cal significance of the entangled relations between humans and hyenas, who, in Harar, are dependent on anthropogenic sources of food. The shared history between humans and hyenas was originally as extensive as the global spread of human populations as such, and goes back to the Pleistocene and Pliocene. Eventually the association became constricted to Africa; thus hyenas completely disappeared from Eurasia. The very long association between hyenas and humans in Ethiopia, where this study took place, seems to be related to the fact that the Abyssinians, the ancient indigenous group in Harar, Ethiopia, “did not bring radically new ways of managing the landscape, nor did they bring ideologies of extermination.”<sup>22</sup> Hence, while close relationships between hyenas and humans could be sustained, particularly in Ethiopia, in other parts of Africa, hyenas were exterminated as they were a threat to pastoralists.

In Ethiopia, lions, which used to prey on hyenas, have disappeared, and widespread growing of “khat” is not threatened by their presence; if anything the farmers believe that the hyenas will deter thieves. The hyenas scavenge on leftover carcasses consumed by the population and occasionally break into pens that have unguarded livestock. Donkeys, though, are forbidden as food for different reasons by the mixed Christian and Muslim population, and given that their numbers far exceed that of the hyenas, they provide an additional source of nourishment. But hyenas are also fed directly by humans, who exploit this local practice as a tourist attraction—and the place, Yusuf’s house, where the poisoned hyena was found by the pack, was one such feeding place. Baynes-Rock suggests that this practice makes the hyenas bolder in the company of people, even though the kind of food they are given is much the same as they would find in garbage dumps by their own scavenging.

The Argobberi gate where the hyenas clashed has a human history, but it is also the site of exchange between three hyena clans. The different hyena clans occupy different territories in different parts of the town, and enter it through different gates. Hyenas mark the boundaries between clans by pasting, defecating, scratching, and enacting or witnessing behavior over disputed food. Baynes-Rock notes that all these methods are unavailable to the hyenas in Harar. Pasting, which is a marking

# Article

## *Deep History, Amnesia, and Animal Ethics: A Case for Inter-Morality*

on grass, is impossible due to the limited vegetation present. Defecating is soon cleaned up by the locals living close by. Hyenas are still feared by the local population, even though there is a close relationship with them. Now, once outside the gated area, the boundaries become much more distinct again. It seems that the particular feeding of hyenas by humans at Yusuf's house is confined to the Sofi clan, and, on encountering the dying hyena, Yusuf assumed the hyena was Sofi; but Baynes-Rock's observations on the angry reactions of the local hyenas made this much less likely. The Aboker hyenas seemed angry at one of their clan being taken off and presumably killed.

There was a lot of aggression displayed by both groups but no physical contact. In that way, it was more like a ritualized display in which the two clans were enacting and reasserting the boundary rather than a conflict over a disputable, moveable line of demarcation.<sup>23</sup>

Did the Aboker clan of hyenas know that one of their members was missing? Baynes-Rock refuses to be drawn on this, except to say that they would have been aware of the commotion a few nights earlier, which had involved one of their clan, since the feeding place is so close to the Aboker territory. And it is the gate that is the place where disputes between clans are resolved. Baynes-Rock suggests that the Argobberi gate "is a mutually constructed, historicized, politicized, meaningful place in the minds of both hyenas and humans who participate in the dramas which are enacted there."<sup>24</sup> In the minds of the local people, these spotted hyenas are agents just like humans, for, according to them, "hyenas hold meetings, make supplications for food, and communicate detailed messages to conspecifics and to humans who can understand hyena language."<sup>25</sup> They also believe that hyenas will punish conspecifics who attack livestock, and that humans who poison or kill hyenas will, in turn, receive retribution. So when the hyena was poisoned, he was treated like a person; waving a match under the nose is standard treatment in this region for those with an epileptic seizure, and so is reciting the Qu'ran over a dying individual. Lime juice is also standard treatment in those cases in which a girl has swallowed bleach—this occasionally happens when a girl is forced to marry against her will. The milk was Baynes-Rock's idea, and Yusuf followed his advice after his own attempts failed.

Hyenas are also thought to be spiritually powerful animals that are able to mediate messages from the local town saints and pass these messages on to people who can understand hyena language. The messages are thought to be quite specific, including information about the number of "jinn" in the town, jinn being unseen spirits that can possess their owners or cause mischief. Hyenas are thought to be able to catch and eat jinn; this explains the behavior of reciting the Qu'ran after the hyena was taken away by the hyena pack. It also explains the long-term persistence of hyenas: far from being a threat, they are thought to be able to protect people from negative spiritual forces. Baynes-Rock concludes:

The multispecies commons challenges us to re-conceptualize the ways in which human and non-human lives are lived; it speaks of meanings which transcend language (Alger and Alger, 2003:76) and loudly demands that we reconfigure the paradigms which guide our understandings of what are social processes.<sup>26</sup>

It also, I suggest, demands that we reconfigure the paradigm which guides *theological* understanding as well, reminding us of a shared creaturely existence in common with all other living things,<sup>27</sup> and is also the means through which humans express that creatureliness in their particular human way, specifically in entangled yet dynamic relationships with other animals. The connection between religious practices and the hyenas understood as agents in a theological drama is also fascinating to me, for it implies that other animals, in some sense, have been mediating agents with the divine. And it is this mediating influence that colors Christian religious history as well, for lurking in the story of Adam and Eve, we find the ubiquitous appearance of the snake.<sup>28</sup>

## Inter-Morality and Its Significance for Animal Ethics

Given the deep history of the relationship between humans and other animals, including specific ones that have coevolved with human beings, such as hyenas and, more recently, domesticated animals such as dogs, a case can be made for *inter-morality*. What do I mean by this term? I mean two things. The first is simple, that human morality emerged not simply in human communities considered in isolation,<sup>29</sup> but in engagement and entanglement with a whole variety of other creatures, including

close interspecies relationships with large cats, such as puma.<sup>30</sup> Is this convincing in terms of evolutionary theory? I suggest that it is, for there has been a significant paradigm shift in evolutionary theory, from a straightforward belief in Darwinian evolution by natural selection, in which certain traits are selected in given external environmental conditions, to one in which much greater attention is paid to the other beings that are present—a phenomenon known in ecological theory for some time, namely, “niche construction.”

Niche construction is significant in the earliest human evolutionary histories and continues into the present, replacing a sociobiology based on survival of the fittest with one that is far more interactive and reciprocal in relationship with other beings. Based on this view, the narrative of the hyenas in Harar that I discussed above, along with similar cases, is crucially important to understand. The particular form that a culture takes is one that is engaged deeply with the living and dynamic presence of animal kinds rather than detached from it. And so that means that morality also is inter-morality. Even Western societies practice a form of inter-morality by the way we treat livestock, the brutalizing cruelty evident in factory farming, the devastation of climate change; all these are interactions between humans and the living beings that also share the planet. Our morality is necessarily inter-morality, and the term “inter” is just a way of bringing this into our conscious memory, lest we forget.

Inter-morality has a second meaning based on arguments I have made in the past, that at least some highly social animals, other than human beings, can be considered as having a moral world.<sup>31</sup> Now, there are risks associated with making such a claim, such as strident rejection of the possibility that other animals have a theory of mind.<sup>32</sup> But the claim that a theory of mind is necessary for morality to exist will depend on prior definitions of what morality means. If morality means collective rules that groups of individuals live by, such that those who do not adhere to those rules are excluded or shunned by the group, then many other animals possess such characteristics. While some ethnographers contend that emotive states are common to both humans and other animals, the least controversial claim is that morality goes beyond limited rules internal to that species.

Thomas Aquinas, and before him Albertus Magnus, was prepared to admit that some specific other animals possess a kind of practical wisdom in their dealings with the world. Now, if they have a practical wisdom and a reasoning of a sort, then why not call this morality? It is clearly not the same as human morality, inasmuch as moral systems or other elaborate works of literature, such as Shakespeare’s plays, have the potential to become abstract and sophisticated to the sixth or even sometimes to the seventh level of social understanding, that is, who knows what about whom. Evolutionary anthropologist Robin Dunbar claims that fewer than one in five of us have levels of social understanding to the sixth level.<sup>33</sup> Many complex moral theories involve such abilities to abstract in terms of social relationships, so there is certainly a “gap” between the abilities of humans and other advanced social species. But the point is that morality did not simply appear in all this complexity from nowhere at all.

I have come to consider that calling the kind of morality that exists in other highly social species “latent” morality or “pre” morality is problematic, as it risks setting up yet another comparative measure with humans. The point is that the kind of morality that operates in the world of social animals is perfectly adequate for their needs as a socially functional group, even if it is different from the kind of abstracted morality that is possible in humans in particular cultural settings, including the one that we are most familiar with in the West. And the occasion of dysfunctional systems of morality is actually, it seems to me, rather *more* likely in the human sphere, due to the potential of humans to be deliberately and consistently cruel in the way that other animals are not.<sup>34</sup> Finally, human moral action, insofar as it includes the emotional as well as the reasonable, is inclusive of those strands in emotional response that humans share with other animals.<sup>35</sup>

So, how might consideration of the above influence animal ethics, and human behavior more generally toward other animals? Rather than claiming that other animals have “rights” that are in some ways parallel to those in humans, there is a need to walk the tightrope between giving other animals their due, in terms of recognizing their distinctive way of being creaturely, and acknowledging how our lives and theirs are enmeshed in all kinds of interesting ways.

# Article

## *Deep History, Amnesia, and Animal Ethics: A Case for Inter-Morality*

Human existence has a history with other animals insofar as many of those animals have a greater capacity for agency, for example, compared with simpler forms of life. It is important to be specific and say which animal, where, and for what reason, as the case with hyenas implied. Hyenas have had a poor reputation in Western cultures as far as human attitudes toward them are concerned, but that is not borne out by examining the deep history of human-hyena relationships. Further, once we acknowledge that entanglement, while it might be possible to dispense with history and act cruelly toward other animals, to do so is something of a betrayal—a betrayal of a shared story in which our relationships with those others is part of who we are and is, I would argue, integral to what it means to bear the image of God. This is not, therefore, about a naturalistic ethic that implies that observations of other animals provide guides to how humans should act, in the manner suggested by Frans de Waal,<sup>36</sup> but a way of qualifying and holding in check how we might act toward those other animals, a recognition of shared history rather than a blueprint for moral living. The relationship between our own histories and how other animals might live can also be worked out through the concept of natural law (the topic of another paper<sup>37</sup>).

According to the model that I am suggesting, image bearing is not so much about a specific capacity, but rather is *performative*.<sup>38</sup> And if performative, it means that human beings have been caught up in a drama with other animal lives from time immemorial. That drama is not one that excludes the divine, but from the point of view of a constructive Christian theology, is inclusive of belief in God: God's providence is over human and other creaturely agency. Such a view does not, therefore, end up with a specific advocacy of, for example, universal adoption of vegetarianism, though some might be drawn to that conclusion based on the abuses that are all too obvious. It does point, however, to the need to treat other animals decently and to acknowledge that they inhabit worlds that are shared with human beings in complex interspecies relationships. ◇

### Acknowledgment

I would like to thank Marcus Baynes-Rock for helpful comments on this article.

### Notes

- <sup>1</sup>Keri MacFarlane, "Living Relationally with Creation: Animals and Christian Faith," *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* 67, no. 4 (2015): 235–44.
- <sup>2</sup>Celia Deane-Drummond, *The Wisdom of the Liminal: Evolution and Other Animals in Human Becoming* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014).
- <sup>3</sup>Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992); and Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 3rd ed. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007).
- <sup>4</sup>Alasdair MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals: Why Human Beings Need the Virtues* (Chicago, IL: Open Court, 1999).
- <sup>5</sup>Jacques Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, ed. Marie-Louise Mallet, trans. David Wills (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 9.
- <sup>6</sup>David Fergusson, "Humans Created according to the *Imago Dei*: An Alternative Proposal," *Zygon* 48, no. 2 (2013): 439–53; and David Clough, *On Animals: Volume 1, Systematic Theology* (London: T&T Clark, 2012). For a discussion of Clough's book, see short papers published in *Zygon* 49, no. 3 (2014), especially David Fergusson, "On God, Christ and Animals," *Zygon* 49, no. 3 (2014): 741–45.
- <sup>7</sup>David Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence: A Theological Anthropology*, 2 vols. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009).
- <sup>8</sup>Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence*, 1:30, 39.
- <sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, 2:897.
- <sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, 2:900.
- <sup>11</sup>See my 2012 Goshen lectures published as Celia Deane-Drummond, *Re-Imaging the Divine Image of God: Humans and Other Animals* (Kitchener, ON: Pandora Press, 2014).
- <sup>12</sup>See, for example, Marc Bekoff, *Animal Passions and Beastly Virtues: Reflections on Redecorating Nature* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2006); Marc Bekoff, *The Emotional Lives of Animals: A Leading Scientist Explores Animal Joy, Sorrow, and Empathy—and Why They Matter* (Novato, CA: New World Library, 2007). His most recent work, *Rewilding Our Hearts: Building Pathways of Compassion and Coexistence* (Novato, CA: New World Library, 2014) applies insights from ethology to wider discussions about climate change and environmental ethics.
- <sup>13</sup>Frans de Waal, *Good Natured: The Origins of Right and Wrong in Humans and Other Animals* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996); de Waal, *The Age of Empathy: Nature's Lessons for a Kinder Society* (London: Souvenir Press, 2009). In his most recent book, *The Bonobo and the Atheist: In Search of Humanism among the Primates* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2013), de Waal, while not as hostile or aggressive as, for example, Richard Dawkins's attempts to weaken any claims that religion is a precursor for morality.
- <sup>14</sup>See, for example, Jonathan Jong and Aku Visala, "Three Quests for Human Nature: Some Philosophical Reflections," *Philosophy, Theology and the Sciences* 1, no. 2 (2014): 146–71.
- <sup>15</sup>See discussion in, for example, Charles Camosy, "Other Animals as Persons? A Roman Catholic Inquiry," in *Animals as Religious Subjects: Transdisciplinary Perspectives*, ed. Celia Deane-Drummond, Rebecca Artinian Kaiser, and David L. Clough (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 259–78.
- <sup>16</sup>Penny A. Spikins, Holly E. Rutherford, and Andy P. Needham, "From Homininity to Humanity: Compassion from the Earliest Archaics to Modern Humans," *Time and*

*Mind: The Journal of Archaeology, Consciousness and Culture* 3, no. 3 (2010): 303–25.

<sup>17</sup>The original source of different strains of Ebola virus is almost certainly animals, including monkeys or, in the case of the most recent outbreak in 2014, bats, and there are a number of different subvariants. This disease has attracted media attention recently, but it has been the topic of research for decades. See, for example, C. J. Peters and J. W. Peters, “An Introduction to Ebola: The Virus and the Disease,” *The Journal of Infectious Diseases* 179, Suppl. 1 (1999): ix–xvi.

<sup>18</sup>Agustin Fuentes, “Ethnoprimateology and the Anthropology of the Human-Primate Interface,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 41 (2012): 101.

<sup>19</sup>Piers Locke, “Explorations in Ethnoelephantology: Social, Historical, and Ecological Intersections between Asian Elephants and Humans,” *Environment and Society: Advances in Research* 4 (2013): 79.

<sup>20</sup>Marcus Baynes-Rock, “Life and Death in the Multispecies Commons,” *Social Science Information* 52 no. 2 (2013): 210–27.

<sup>21</sup>Baynes-Rock, “Life and Death,” 213.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 215.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 221.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 221.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 221.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., 224.

<sup>27</sup>For further discussion of this point see essays in Celia Deane-Drummond and David Clough, *Creaturely Theology: On God, Humans and Other Animals* (London: SCM Press, 2009).

<sup>28</sup>I have commented on the particular significance of this as it relates to Christian teaching about the fall of humanity in Celia Deane-Drummond, “The Birth of Morality and the Fall of Adam through an Evolutionary Interspecies Lens,” *Theology Today* 72, no. 2 (2015): 182–93.

<sup>29</sup>For further discussion of the evolutionary aspects of this see Celia Deane-Drummond and Agustin Fuentes, “Human Being and Becoming: Situating Theological Anthropology in Interspecies Relationships in an Evolutionary Context,” *Philosophy, Theology and the Sciences* 1, no. 2 (2014): 251–75.

<sup>30</sup>Eduardo Kohn, *How Forests Think: Toward an Anthropology beyond the Human* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2013). Kohn’s fascinating discussion of the Runa people of Amazonia and their relationship with puma includes attributing religious significance to puma in a manner that has some resemblance with the hyena case discussed above. Kohn makes a case from a secular anthropological perspective for holding back on excessive attention to what makes humans exceptional (p. 22).

<sup>31</sup>Celia Deane-Drummond, “Are Animals Moral? Taking Soundings through Vice, Virtue, Conscience and Imago Dei,” in *Creaturely Theology: On God, Humans and Other Animals*, ed. Celia Deane-Drummond and David Clough (London: SCM Press, 2009): 190–210. A shorter version of this chapter is also published in *Zygon*, Celia Deane-Drummond, “Are Animals Moral? A Theological Appraisal of the Evolution of Vice and Virtue,” *Zygon* 44, no. 4 (2009): 932–50.

<sup>32</sup>For discussion of this, see Frans de Waal, *Primates and Philosophers: How Morality Evolved*, ed. Stephen Macedo and Josiah Ober (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009).

<sup>33</sup>Robin I. M. Dunbar, “Mind the Gap; or Why Humans Are Not Just Great Apes,” *Proceedings of the British Academy* 154 (2008): 403–23.

<sup>34</sup>Personal communication, Agustin Fuentes.

<sup>35</sup>See interesting article on this topic by Jean Porter, “Moral Passions: A Thomistic Interpretation of Moral Emotions in Non Human and Human Animals,” *Journal of Moral Theology* 3, no. 2 (2014): 72–92.

<sup>36</sup>See, for example, Frans de Waal, *The Age of Empathy: Nature’s Lessons for a Kinder Society* (London: Souvenir Press, 2009). De Waal translates his “tower of morality” idea into something even more robust in this book, namely, a guide for human moral behavior. De Waal is correct to identify empathetic tendencies in other social species. However, there is a difference between this observation and a case for pure moral naturalism. He is somewhat mistaken both in terms of the evidence that exists for analogous behaviors in our closest primate relatives, and with respect to a case for naturalistic ethics. A full discussion of this debate is outside the scope of this article and takes it down a line of argument that I have tried to resist in this paper, namely, a comparative one between us (humans) and them (everything else).

<sup>37</sup>Celia Deane-Drummond, “Natural Law Revisited: Wild Justice and Human Obligations for Other Animals,” *Journal of the Society for Christian Ethics* (forthcoming).

<sup>38</sup>I discuss the idea of image bearing as performative in more detail in Deane-Drummond, *The Wisdom of the Liminal*.

**ASA Members:** Submit comments and questions on this article at [www.asa3.org](http://www.asa3.org) → FORUMS → PSCF DISCUSSION.



**NEXUS** community connections

Sharing stories & insights  
Inspiring lifelong learning  
Personal, professional connections

Join the conversation at [www.asa3.org](http://www.asa3.org)

