Two-sided nature of dolphins (Julita, Poland)

Dolphins are often portrayed as friendly and gentle animals, but their social behaviour can be surprisingly brutal. In reality, they are predators with extremely high intelligence, and that intelligence allows for actions that are far from innocent. Dolphins are capable of killing without any real need. They have been observed attacking other animals and sometimes even members of their own species, not to eat them, but for dominance, stimulation or just for fun.

In some populations, males form groups that function almost like gangs. They cooperate closely, control territory and display extreme aggression towards others. Their social life can be just as ruthless. Dolphins practice social exclusion, which means weaker or undesirable individuals can be pushed out of the group.

But on the other side, dolphins are capable of empathy so strong that it can become dangerous. Entire groups may try to keep a sick or injured individual at the surface so it can breathe, sometimes to the point of complete exhaustion and even death of the helpers. Finally, there is grief. Dolphin mothers have been observed carrying their dead children for days, refusing to let them sing.

This behaviour has no biological benefit, it is purely emotional. Dolphins are therefore neither good nor evil, they are intelligent, self-aware and emotional, capable of both cruelty and deep attachment, that is what makes them disturbingly similar to humans.