

Chapter 5.04 The Evolution of Religion and Morality

This chapter describes how religion evolved and describes more of the conditions that led to the evolution of morality. This book does not explain fully how morality evolved but it does give the basic idea. I go into details elsewhere. Technically, the capacities for religion and morality evolved. Religion and morality do not evolve biologically although they change historically and vary by culture. "Religion evolved" and "morality evolved" mean the capacities evolved. A change in the content of religion (Roman Catholic or Lutheran) or of morality ("pro life" versus "pro choice") is not biological evolution. The capacities for religion and morality are the same in all people and all cultures, and do not change with changes in content. Thai people do not have a different capacity for religion than Greek people although Thai people stress different aspects. I am not concerned with change in the content.

Religion.

The evolution of religion is fairly simple if we ignore links to morality and social life. From an old Hindu parable: Imagine you are walking down the road, reach a shallow bend, and see a squiggly dark line a few feet away. You can't quite make it out. It could be a twisty stick or a poisonous snake. If you over-react by taking the stick for a snake, you feel a bit foolish for having a lively imagination, but you live, and you pass on your genes for a lively imagination. If you under-react by taking the snake for a stick, you die, and your genes for stodginess end. Often it is better to over-react than to under-react. This over-reaction is part of not exactly mirroring the environment and part of having distinct mental organs. Life situations often are not symmetrical. Situations are biased toward lively imagination, and the bias accumulates. Because of cumulative asymmetric bias, all people would gradually tend to see the world as livelier than it might really be.

When people have a choice between seeing a situation as mechanical or as lively, nearly all people see it as lively. We "go for" lively in nearly all pairs of contrasts. When we can see animals as mute or as having speech, we imagine they can talk. When we think that animals can understand us or not, we think they can understand us. We personify. We even think of inanimate objects or events as having a personality, such as Betsy the rifle, Betsy the car, or Bob the hurricane. Mountains are alive and have their own spirit. Trees are alive. Each tree has its own spirit, and each kind of tree has a spirit peculiar to that kind. The woods are full of Ents, but, alas, no Ent wives. Get two flashlights, one with a white light and the other with a colored light. Shine them on a wall, and make one spot chase the other. Everybody will see a chase, yet two light spots chasing each other is impossible. With three lights, you can make one light give something to the second, and the second one return it. That is even more impossible yet that is something we are primed to see. We do to the natural world what group life has done to us and to our minds. We see the world in terms of speech, intention, others, giving, reciprocity, generalized other, and all the other mental abilities.

Already this is religion. The particulars of religion depend on the particulars of each group in its own environment, with its culture, social organization, and history. The liveliness of the world, the human imagination, and social dynamics, all interact to form the particular religions of particular groups at particular times. How this happens is too much for here.

People tend most to make lively what is materially tangible, what they can see, feel, and hear. We do not tend as much to make lively what we do not immediately experience; but we will do that too under the right conditions. We make the wind alive and we also make the change in winds with the seasons alive. We make the trees alive and we make the forest alive although the forest is not any one particular tree. Individual tigers have a spirit and there is also a spirit of tiger kind. This is how we have invisible and intangible spirits.

Originally, human religion among hunter-gatherers contained many various living, lively, and spiritual things. Probably original religion did not have a strict order and hierarchy among the many lively things. The spirit of the elm was not necessarily higher than the spirit of the otter. Later when people lived in societies with centralized power, strong clear order, and hierarchies, they projected that onto the spirit world. Then the spirits of the bear, the oak, and the bull might be greater than the spirits of the gopher, the willow, and the deer. Eventually people developed the idea of one all-powerful all-knowing God. The idea of one God is probably not an original long-standing idea but a derived idea. The fact that the idea of one God is derived does not make it true or false. The fact that the idea of an airplane is derived from birds does not make it true or false, and does not make any plane fly or crash. Whether the idea of one God is true or false is another issue to be decided in other ways.

(As many pet owners know, dogs and cats respond to moving light spots. On TV, I saw a group of four penguins, in unison, as if their heads were on linked swivels, follow a moving spot of light. It is not clear if pets see the light spots as really alive, see the spots as imitation alive, simply respond to moving spots of any kind, know it is a game, know particular games have guidelines, know games have players (have others with intent), know the game is with a trusted person, guess the intent of the other player, know the game is about a thing that is life-like but not really alive, know how to pretend, or something else. I think many dogs and cats know they are playing a pretend game, about something life-like but not really alive, with a trusted friend, know the basic intent of the friend, and know there are guidelines. Because I think all this, most biologists say I give animals too much credit. It is hard to prove any alternative to the exclusion of others.)

Not only do we see the world as lively, we also see the world in terms of categories that are features of the human mind, such as “inert” (rocks), “passive” (plants), and “active” (animals). We put active things into categories such as “can move but has little mind” (caterpillar), and “can move and has a mind of its own” (cats), “material”, “not material (spiritual)”, “living”, or “more than living”. Most things, most of the time, stay in their one proper category but sometimes something straddles categories such as a flying benevolent pig spirit. Those borderline beings we tend to see as powerful, dangerous, funny, concerned, malevolent, or a combination. There is a relation between how we see the world and our social lives, especially between social lives and beings that straddle categories. A talking tree could be very important to a family that makes its living hunting in the forest or cutting wood. The subject of natural categories is a big, new, and exciting in anthropology now and will become increasingly important. Unfortunately, it is not clear-cut enough to go into here. For here, the idea of a lively world is enough. If other ideas are needed, I introduce them where they are needed.

It is important to see that I have not explained away religion. Religion could be true or false regardless of whether the capacity for it evolved. Just because something has a biological basis does not mean it is

true, false, an illusion, or a delusion. Just because some evolved capacity gives us comfort, does not mean we are under a delusion. Even if the thing is an illusion, that fact does not mean it is entirely false or wrong. Probably we are evolved not to think of particular trees so much as to think of types of trees; in fact, we are probably evolved to think at about the level of genus rather than the level of species or individual: we think of “oaks” rather than of “live oaks” or of “this particular live oak that I can see from my window”. That does not mean there are no genuses or species. Just because we evolved to think of some sticks as snakes does not mean all sticks are snakes or that there are no snakes when we see a snake. We evolved to take comfort from love and friendship but that does not mean those are delusions. Even if they are not entirely reliable, that does not mean they are bad illusions. We do not judge an idea as true, false, valid, or invalid, because the basis for it evolved. We judge on other criteria. We do not judge the validity of scientific method just because the basis for it evolved; we judge it on other criteria. We do not judge whether God exists only because we evolved the basis to believe in God but on other criteria. The same is true of morality. We do not judge the objectivity and validity of morality according to whether it evolved but according to other criteria, similar to scientific method.

Groups and Morality.

This section describes how group life “calls forth” morality. I call this path to morality the way of “self-selected groups of good guys”.

(1) Start with a bunch of people who are selfish. A bunch like this can hardly form a group. They pilfer from each other. They lie about how much they hunted or gathered, or how long they worked at the office, so they can claim to contribute more and are entitled to more. They cheat on their spouses when they can. They use violence when they want something and somebody else will not give it. Morality hardly makes sense here. We can hardly say there is any reciprocal altruism or commitment of the kind that leads to morality. I have seen groups of housemates that come close to this horrible situation, and I have seen neighborhoods in cities that come close. People leave when they can.

(2) Now imagine the exact opposite. All the people in the group are kind, considerate, helpful, generous, and trusting. Everybody shares. Everybody tells the truth. People give according to the need of others, take only according to true need, and contribute according to ability without considering the contribution of others – somewhat like Marx’s idealized communism. There is always enough to go around even if there is not enough so that everybody is rich. Oddly, this situation hardly feels moral either. People could not get to this situation without a prior feeling of morality, but, if this situation ever gets going, people are so good that they don’t have to think about being good. Nobody suffers much hardship so there is not much to be really moral about. “Love your neighbor as yourself”, “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you”, and “treat everybody equally” truly prevail. Some situations of really good roommates, and really good families, actually approach this condition. Otherwise, it does not happen.

(3) More realistically, people face occasional problems. We never have and we squabble over bones such as sexual jealousy. People feel the need for sharing and forgiveness. They are not always quick to do it, but they do come around, and eventually they do it. They forgive, help out, and get back on good terms. They learn they can trust over the long haul. This is when we feel the need for morality, when morality works, and when morality does good works. This is the situation among groups of friends that

we see on TV, among households of real people, and in some religious groups. It can even develop among neighbors and workmates.

(4) Now begin with an imperfect but overall pretty good situation. Then a bad family moves into the neighborhood. They borrow stuff without returning it, or return it damaged. In effect, they steal food or tools when they say they are only borrowing. They never loan anything out. They always ask for help with house repairs, car repairs, or lawn work but never give any help in return. They make noise, litter, and leave broken bikes all over. If you run over one of their toys, they say you broke it and make you replace it. They smoke and drink, and give cigarettes and booze to our kids. Their lawn is covered with butts. They borrow money when their house payment is due. If you don't help, they complain they will become homeless, and that a worse family will move in instead. Their sons seduce your daughters. The husband tries to seduce the neighborhood wives. Their daughters seduce the neighborhood husbands. The wife tries to seduce the neighborhood sons. The daughters blackmail the neighborhood husbands for big gifts such as cars, and they don't care if they wreck homes. Their men mug people at night, and they have beaten up men from other families who crossed them or tried to expose them. Their daughters forcibly take food, cosmetics, and boyfriends from our daughters. People are afraid of them.

Quickly, good people have nothing to do with bad neighbors. People stick hard to the proven neighbors that they can trust. We stop our wives, husbands, sons, daughters, and friends from consorting with bad neighbors both from fear they will be victimized and fear they will become like the bad neighbors. People band together to force bad neighbors out or to protect against bad neighbors. The people who band together to follow, and to enforce, reliable mutually beneficial behavior are the "self-selected group of good guys". Morality means a lot more as it comes to be not only a practical support but also a mark of who you can trust, who is really helpful, and who is "like us" or "not like us". With several bad neighbors in the neighborhood, the neighborhood would divide up into moral people "like us" versus immoral people "like them". Groups become important, and groups line up along feelings about morality.

(5) The real situation throughout most of human evolution was a combination of all these situations but more like a combination of the last two. People recognized their own group as their own group, and were as good as they could be among their own. People recognized other groups as others. They gave other groups a chance, but, if other groups did not show their high moral quality quickly, our group treated them like bad neighbors.

Any group of generally good people is always vulnerable to bad people exploiting the group, at least at first. Bad people can come from outside. Good people on the inside can succumb to temptation. Good people on the inside can turn bad. In the movies, the good people are the peasant village invaded by bad bandits. On TV, good people who turn bad include the husband who becomes an alcoholic and abuses his family and the neighbors. They include the housewife whose husband leaves her for a young bimbo, so she takes to pills, booze, borrowing, conning, and seduction.

Because morality is vulnerable to invasion by badness from within or without, morality can only succeed (evolve) under particular conditions. Morality has to be done among a group of people who act morally to each other but do not necessarily act morally toward others. Moral people have to recognize other moral people. Reciprocal altruism prevails within a moral group but not between a moral group and bad others. Moral people feel almost like kin to each other and act almost like kin. Moral people also have to

recognize bad people. Moral people have to aim good action toward good people and they have to avoid bad people. If necessary, they have to punish bad people. They even have to punish good people who aid bad people, might aid bad people, might become bad people, or are not zealous enough in separating out and punishing bad people. For morality to succeed, sometimes it needs enforcers like John Wayne or Jimmy Stewart. Morality depends on being able to label good people and bad people, and being able to separate into distinct groups of good us versus bad them. Moral people have to feel moral indignation sometimes. All this is sad sometimes, but it is a fact.

Within a self-selected moral group, people approach the moral ideal. “Do unto others” and the other ideals make sense. But they only make sense because they are limited in scope. People do not, and cannot, extend the idea of loving your neighbor as yourself to bad neighbors. If benevolence does extend naively to bad neighbors, not only do good guys get hurt personally but their children get hurt as well. If a moral teacher such as Jesus or the Buddha tells us to extend the ideals beyond the boundaries of our moral group, either he-she thinks the other people are moral too and we can merge to become one bigger moral group, he-she thinks extending ideals can actually make the other group change to live toward the ideals, or he-she is naively insane. It would be great if other people were always really moral but just appeared not moral to us because of small superficial customs – like Catholics and Protestants. But it is not always so. It would be great if being nice to bad neighbors turned them into nice neighbors - but we know that is not always so. It is hard to turn a drug gang into nice people by being nice to them first. We can keep moral ideals in mind, especially if we know their evolutionary basis, but we have to assess how well we can apply them in particular situations. The ability to make that judgment also has an in our evolved nature.

In the previous chapter, we saw how commitment, kin selection, and reciprocal altruism support group life. They lead to groups of mutually helpful members. When commitment, kin selection, and reciprocal altruism combine with “self-selected good guys”, groups can become quite stable and the moral rules of the group can become strong and lasting. Something like this very likely happened in human evolutionary history. Social scientists are trying to understand better how it did happen and are trying to find evidence for it in the artifacts left behind by our ancestors.

The Big “Us” and “Us and Them”.

Groups of self-selected good guys need ways to think about the group, their relation to the group, their relation to the people not in the group, and their relation to other groups. This need is one of the big forces in the evolution of sentience. Here I can only mention one way, and some of the results. Just as we personify wiggly sticks, mountains, and the weather, so we personify our group and other groups. We think of the group as a big person with its own personality. We find symbols for our group and our relation to our group, much as colleges have athletic teams with mascots.

To better relate to our group, we tend to split ourselves into two inside. This sounds counterintuitive, but it works and it happens. We have an “I” that is more like our personal selves, and a “me” that is like the part of me in the group. We identify the “me” with the group. We carry on an inner dialog between the “I” and the “me” that is like the dialog between “I” and the group, and that helps us deal with the group. The “me” helps me know what the group wants and what I can expect from the group. This inner dialog adds to the feeling of having a conscience.

Almost by definition, the people in groups of self-selected good guys are good to each other. They are not always so good to other people outside their group and to other groups. The members are “we”, other people are not. We think of us as “us” and think of anybody not in our group as “them”, as “other”, and as not quite up to standard. Not only are the others not in the same group as us, they are morally different too. They are not quite right. They are not fully moral. Sometimes they do bad things, and they are especially likely to do bad things to us. Sometimes they talk and dress funny. They have strange ideas about dating, sex, family, marriage, and spirits. We need to be careful in our dealings with them. Especially we need to be careful about marrying them. Our relation with a group of them can too easily turn into lasting hostility.

These feelings of otherness and hostility are part of what Jesus and other religious leaders try to get us to overcome. These feelings are what bad leaders tap into and promote.

Some Darwinists see the great importance of group effects in morality and argue that morality could only develop when groups control individuals. This view contradicts a long strong position in Darwinism that individuals are key. I tend to side with traditional Darwinism. Other than what I just said, I do not enter into this conflict.

Moral Logic, Practicality, and Moral Evolution.

On the one hand, if morality were exactly the same as practicality, if morality were always practical, then it would not be necessary. It would be redundant. It would be like telling a lion that she should chase a gazelle or telling a mouse that he should run from the cat. If morality were always practical, we would only need to do what is practical. Since we do have morality, moral logic cannot be exactly the same as practicality.

On the other hand, if morality were not usually practical, then evolution would never have sustained it. Evolution cannot get us to do what is not in our better interests for very long. Organisms that do what is against their better interests lose the race of comparative competition with organisms that do what is in their own better interests. Only organisms that do what is in their better interests leave many offspring to make up the character of the species. We are the descendants of the ancestors that did what is in their better interests.

In some cases, morality does lead us to do what is against our better interests, such as when we do not seduce our neighbor’s spouse even when we would not get caught, or do not cheat on our own spouse even when we would not get caught. On the whole, though, most moral acts are practical. Honesty really is the best policy. The gain we get from being moral most of the time more than makes up for the loss we suffer from sometimes going against moral logic. That is why evolution sustains moral logic even though moral logic is not always practical. If this were not the case, morality could never evolve. From now on, I take it for granted that this was the case, and this is how morality did evolve. I also take for granted that usually it still is the case. Usually morality is still practical. So, (1) moral logic is not the same as practicality, but (2) moral logic and practicality very often coincide because morality evolved. These facts are so important that I recall them at the beginning of the next chapter.

Now we need a feel for what moral logic would be sustained by evolution in a group, what logic would be both practical-most-of-the-time but not-exactly-practical. Suppose we have a successful group of self-selected good guys in which commitment, kin selection, and reciprocal altruism are important and are directed at people who are reliable. We need rules to guide particular relations between members, such as rules about food, clothes, fires, and other “stuff”. What kind of rules would have to prevail? In original human life, people did not differ by status, wealth, power, and achievement as much modern Americans do (they did differ; they were not egalitarian). In those conditions, only a rule that carried with it the idea of “applies equally to everybody” would be acceptable to everybody and would prevail. Only a rule that applied equally to everybody could serve as the logical basis for morality. In the original human condition, any people that were not treated equally under a rule would simply leave. Only “applies equally to everybody” could get all self-selected good guys to stay in the group. No other rule could so clearly serve as the basis for labeling people who did not follow the rule as “bad” and excluding them. If we do not want other people to steal from us, we cannot steal from them. If we want them to share, we have to share. If we want them to tell the truth, we have to tell the truth. There is no other logical simple basis for rules that can apply to the whole group. We have to do unto others as we want them to do to us, or else we get cut out of the group of self-selected good guys. That is the logical basis for morality.

Rules that carry the feeling of “applies equally to everybody” carry a moral feeling. We can say “should” or “ought” about them. All rules that we want to apply to everybody have to carry the feeling of “applies equally to everybody”. People that feel this sentiment seek out other people like themselves, interact with others like themselves, and prevail. Despite any short-term small disadvantages, overall they do better than people who cannot feel this moral feeling. This is natural selection at work. Eventually most people in a group of self-selected good guys feel the moral feeling and sense it is tied to the idea of “applies equally to everybody”. People who cannot feel it are excluded, and do not do as well. Eventually most people come to feel the call of morality, and they sense that it depends on the logic of “applied equally to everybody”. This is how natural selection established morality among humans. The people that felt moral feelings and responded according to the logic of “applies equally” were the ancestors of us all. Morality has other aspects to its logic besides “applies equally to everybody”. The other aspects have roots in sentience and group life too but I cannot get into that in this book. The other aspects go along with “applies equally”. The next chapter goes into them.

Mixed People.

Of course, it is not that simple. The basis story is correct but there are complications we have to take into account to make sense of Jesus and other prophets. People are not perfect saints and cannot become perfect saints. We are all a mixture of good and bad. Only when we accept this can we take advice from prophets as to what to do about it.

Helping kin (inclusive fitness and kin selection), reciprocal altruism, extending kinship behavior to non-kin, extending reciprocal altruism to non-neighbors, and self-selected good guys, all are natural behaviors in that the capacity for them is in our genes. All our various emotional behaviors and moral behaviors are natural in the same sense. Sharing, kindness, honesty, loyalty, honor, helping, integrity, protecting neighbors, protecting the weak and helpless, feeding the poor, and many other good moral traits are natural in the same sense that they have a basis in our genes due to our evolutionary history. Good behavior succeeds a lot of the time. The people who live in moral groups succeed most of the time, and

so the ability for good behavior is passed on to their descendants. They were our ancestors. Most people like the idea that our goodness has a natural basis in our evolutionary history.

On the other hand, bad behavior is also naturally in our genes. Whining, stubbornness, lying, cheating, stealing, betraying our spouse, seducing people, beating up people, bullying, plundering, rape, and even murder are also natural in that they have a basis in our genes and we can learn to do them in the right circumstances. Bad behavior succeeds well, too much of the time. Nearly all groups of good people are vulnerable to bad behavior, and so bad behavior can succeed at least to the extent that it can parasitize good behavior. Wherever we have good neighbors, sooner or later some bad neighbors will show up, and they can succeed for a while. As long as good neighbors keep down the ratio of bad neighbors to a minimum, paradoxically enough, the minimum of bad neighbors actually can persist. People defend their kin even when their kin are bad. Even among good people, some bad boys and bad girls succeed. Because bad boys do succeed sometimes, many girls romanticize bad boys. The willingness of good girls to consort with bad boys means that bad boys succeed even more, in a kind of feedback. Boys also are attracted to bad girls and romanticize them, and also seek to have commitment-free sex. Real groups need enforcers. Enforcers can go bad. Sometimes bad boys now become enforcers later, another reason why girls might like them. There are many ways in which bad can persist among good. I do not show all the ways but you should be able to imagine it well enough. When bad behavior does succeed, people with the genetic capacity for that bad behavior leave descendants in the population. Their descendants are among our ancestors. Bad behavior that succeeds leaves the capacity for bad behavior in human nature. Bad behavior is also natural.

Unlike good behavior within a successful group of self-selected good guys, bad behavior cannot run rampant in any group. If a group had only murderers, then everybody (but one) would be dead eventually, and no genes would pass on. If a group had only slackers, then nobody would get any food, everybody would starve to death, and no genes would pass on.

Because good behavior ideally can persist without bad behavior, but bad behavior cannot flourish without good behavior, and humans evolved in groups that supported a lot of good behavior, people in general tend to be pretty good. We are surprisingly good compared to some of our near relatives such as chimps and baboons.

How natural selection determines the mix of good and bad is a big and fascinating topic in evolutionary theory now. I cannot go into it more here.

Everybody is a mix of traits. Everybody has natural dispositions. The actual traits that any person develops depend on his-her original natural dispositions and on his-her personal history. We are all moral mixtures. We are mixtures because of both nature and nurture. We should not expect everybody to be pretty much alike in his-her moral sensibilities and in his-her moral actions. This is a lesson of Jane Austen novels.

Society is a mixture of mixed people. Sometimes particular kinds of people prevail in particular kinds of societies, as when we hope that the honest and brave prevail in democracies and we say conniving cowards prevail in totalitarian societies. Yet even in societies that have a dominant theme, we can find all kinds of people because of varying underlying natural dispositions that show up even in conditions of strong social learning.

People see different lessons in the fact that people are mixed and societies are mixed. Some people see the handiwork of the Devil while other people see the amoral kaleidoscope of natural selection. Some people see God giving us an opportunity to exercise real morality, an opportunity we would not have if somehow everybody were fully good. If we want to believe in God but not in the Devil, then what we make of the situation depends on whether we think God foresaw the situation.

Feedback Cycles.

Good deeds call forth good deeds while bad deeds call forth bad deeds. If we really want people to be better, and we want to live in a better world, we need a sense of how to break the bad cycle to restart the good cycle. If morality did not have its own independent logic apart from its service to practicality, probably there would never be a way to break out of bad cycles once we fell into them. Because morality is logically independent of immediate practicality, we can use moral logic to take non-practical leaps and so break a cycle of bad.

Suppose we are in a good relation of reciprocal altruism with our neighbor by lending him tools while he gives us barbecued food and eventually returns our tools. One day he stops giving us barbecued food and does not return an expensive tool. We stop lending him any more tools. He starts playing loud heavy metal head banger music or loud obscene hip hop music in his back yard on weekends. We start turning on the sprinkler when it is time for he and his wife to go to work and to come back from work. We set up our kid in a rock band in the garage. We have all seen this on TV and in many movies.

Paradoxically, moral indignation, which should serve to weed out bad acts and so avoid bad situations, can actually make bad situations worse once the bad situation sets in. The most famous world example is relations between Jews and Muslims. A more familiar example in the United States is relations between Blacks and other ethnic groups. Once the bad situation sets in, people use moral indignation not primarily to point out bad behavior, including their own bad behavior, but as a tool to accuse other people and try to control other people. A reliable sign that moral indignation is being misused is that the moral fault is hardly worth the fervor of the indignation.

We have also seen how it ends. Somebody has to break through the crap. Somebody has to stop with the bad deeds and start with a great big good deed. Sometimes it takes a real need to make us see how foolish we are. Suppose I get cancer and our neighbor now wants to help by doing some of my chores. Suppose he loses his job and I start feeding him and his family barbecue. Then all the other annoyances stop too. If I get over my cancer and he finds a job, then we are even better friends than we were before.

Most people are basically good despite the potential for bad. People who are successful at living in some group likely have at least a minimum of good in them. If we can reach across unfortunate events or surface groups differences, we might be able to contact the good in them and so expand the good that is available to us all.

To successfully reach out, we have to act on the feeling of goodness without immediate concern for practicality. Rarely can practicality alone cause us to reach out. Goodness has to compel us because it is good and not because it is practical. Sometimes we need to take a chance. Morality needs its own

logic apart from practicality. We need a feeling-logic of morality apart from practicality for morality to reach its best practicality.

This is what a lot of religion is all about. Jesus, and other religious leaders, taught us to do good for the sake of doing good and to avoid doing bad because it is bad. Jesus and the other leaders also realized that doing good for its own sake would break cycles of bad and would institute cycles of good, both moral good and practical good. Some of their teachings seemed specifically aimed at doing good to others, such as the parable of the Good Samaritan and the admonitions to forgive and forgive and forgive. This part of the book aims to show why their teachings really do make sense and why it makes sense of their teachings to think that God might have put us in an arena where we can use their teachings.