

Chapter 5.05 Moral Variations and Moral Logic

People think of morality as one thing but it isn't. It has several distinct but related and mutually dependent components. Plato devoted his philosophical life trying to subsume all moral ideas under the category of "the Good" but failed. This chapter describes the major aspects of morality. This chapter describes the major components of morality in terms of how they might have evolved but does not build a strong case; I hope to do that elsewhere. The major components of morality are listed below. "Good" and "greater good" come as a pair but not in the same way as "should and should not", "right and wrong", or "rights and duties".

Good and Bad Greater Good Rules and Principles Should and Should Not Right and Wrong Rights and Responsibilities (Duties)

Logic of Morality.

Morality has an underlying logic. The underlying logic does not make morality one thing although it helps morality feel like one thing. The logic of morality can be expressed in several ways, listed below. The fact that the underlying logic can be expressed variously does not make the logic one thing or many things. The logic of morality is not necessarily diverse in the same way that morality is diverse. I don't go into the logic of morality here except to note as much as we need. No one aspect of the logic of morality necessarily goes along with any one aspect of morality. Exactly how the underlying logic of morality relates to the parts of morality is not definite and I don't go into it here.

If you want only one aspect of the logic of morality, use "applies equally". The other aspects of the logic are variations of "applies equally" when "applies equally" is used by sentient beings. The logic shows up clearly in the idea of moral good, which is why I describe that aspect of morality first. Empathies 1 and 2 probably can be fused but it is easier for now to separate them.

(0) This point is a precondition to the other ways of expressing moral logic. It underscores that morality and sentience evolved together. Morality and sentience are intimately linked among all evolved beings (people). Morality is about sentient-moral beings (people) being in the world. Morality is about relations between beings that can have a relationship. In particular, morality is about relations among sentient-moral beings (people to people, people to spirits, and people to God); relations of sentient-moral beings with near-sentient-moral beings (many animals); sentient-moral beings caring for non-sentient beings (all life, and special places); and sentient-moral beings taking care of nature. Relations between sentient-moral beings come first logically. They are set up by evolution. Sentient-moral beings generalize out the relations to other players such as animals. Often when "person" or "people" occur below, you can add spirits, animals, special places, nature, and extra-terrestrial sentient-moral beings.

(1) Any rule or idea applies equally to everybody including me, my kin, and my stuff.

(2) The Golden Rule: do unto other people as you would have them do unto you.

(3) Empathy 1: I am like that person, that other person is like me, and most people are alike in deep ways that are relevant to the issues at hand. "Love your neighbor as yourself". "Everybody is holy".

(4) Empathy 2: "There but for the grace of God goes me". "Walk in the other person's shoes". It is not enough to understand we are all alike; we have to know what deep similarity implies. What happened to he-she might have happened to me, and what happened to me might have happened to he-she, good and bad. We have to act on the basis of "might have been the other person".

(5) Respecting Similarity and Difference. People are similar and different. Differences can be interesting, and can matter. We should not always think of people as the same even though we have to treat them as equal often. The balance of similar and different depends on situations. The balance should be worked out in accord with the principles listed above. "Everybody is still holy".

Reminder: Morality and Practicality.

Moral logic differs from practicality but moral action coincides with practicality most of the time. Many people mistakenly think morality can't be true unless impractical; real morality has to hurt. In fact, most morality is practical, as in the old adage "honesty is the best policy". Following moral logic does sometimes lead us to a practical loss, as when we do not steal or lie even if we would not get caught. Still, on the whole, acting in accord with moral logic leads to overall gain. In the original condition in which humans evolved, usually lying and stealing hurt us. If following the logic of morality did not lead to overall gain, morality could not be sustained by evolution, morality could not have evolved. I always assume that acting in accord with moral logic leads to an overall gain, so morality could have evolved, and morality did evolve in that way. I do not specify in detail how morality evolved that way and I do not argue the issue.

Optional Technical Note: Wrong Essentialist Thinking.

Here I do something I don't like because the need for brevity forces me. I write as if conditions "call forth" morality, as if morality is the obvious best fit to meet human needs in a set of conditions. I write as if morality had a single "all about" and I could specify that "all about" exactly. This kind of explanation is called "essentialist", and it is normal, but, in most cases of evolution, it is misleading. When thinking about the evolution of morality, essentialism usually reinforces the wrong idea that morality is one thing. Correct arguments take a lot of space. By being careful, I avoid saying anything wrong or too misleading.

Sense of Taste.

We think of morality as like the sense of sight in which there is one unified view, all the parts fit exactly together, and there is no overlap unless one thing is in front of another. Thinking of morality as like sight probably led philosophers astray. Morality is more like the sense of taste. The sense of taste has five major flavor components: salt, sour, sweet, bitter, and "umami" (the flavor of amino acid, like the taste of miso soup). Despite overlap and fuzziness in tastes of various foods, from these five distinct flavors, we can distinguish and/or put together thousands of different tastes. We can tell the taste of one fish, trout, from the taste of a closely related fish, salmon. We can tell apart two similar fruits, oranges and tangerines. We can tell when two different fruits are still both fruits. We can tell when two different

foods sometimes taste alike, as with mushrooms and tofu. Probably we can do this only because the sense of smell is not like the sense of sight. Likewise, with a few moral components, we can apply moral judgment to thousands of different situations. We recognize there is overlap and fuzziness but we can proceed anyhow.

Original Human Condition.

For this chapter, except where noted otherwise, assume a group of people in the original human condition of hunting and gathering. These were not stupid “cave people”. These people were just as smart as you and I (many had larger brains on average than modern humans). They were more like the idealized stereotype of Native Americans (American “Indians”) where they lived by hunting and gathering alone, especially on the plains and deserts of the United States West or Northwest coast of the US. They were sophisticated, with fully modern language and art.

Good and Bad.

Assume a group of people with small differences in status, wealth, power, strength, vigor, kinship ties, fertility, knowledge, and special skills such as musical ability, but differences don't matter much. Differences in gender and age don't matter much. This is a group of self-selected good guys. Practical good is what aids reproductive success: health, food, mates, good weather, relief from stress, friends, etc. “Bad” is the opposite of “good”.

All languages that I could find out about have two related but distinct ideas of “good”: practical good and moral good. When we say, “it is good to read to your sick brother Mike”, we mean both kinds of good. It is typical of human talk that we usually don't distinguish between the two. Languages have ways to make the two distinct when necessary. Compare “Mike feels good now” with “you are a good son to read to your sick brother Mike”.

Moral good is likely based on practical good and evolved from it. Moral bad is the opposite of moral good.

Moral good is what we do to aid the practical good of others, and also is in accord with the basic logic of “applies equally to everybody”, the Golden Rule, and “put yourself in their shoes”. Not only is it practically good to share with others when we have and they have not, it is also morally good. Once moral good is established, moral good is also what we do to aid the moral good of others based on the ideas of “applies equally” etc. It is morally good to teach children not to lie or steal (to be honest) even when they are not doing anything bad right now. Moral good is what we do for others, and we would want them to do it for us as well.

Moral good comes from seeing other people as similar to us and seeing us as similar to other people. Moral good does not require seeing others as exactly like us, but it is easier to make the jump from practical good to moral good if we feel other people are similar to us and are one of us. So moral good arises from seeing everybody pretty much like us, seeing everybody as pretty much like everybody else, and seeing us as pretty much like everybody else. This happens first in a self-selected group of good guys. We do not see everybody as one totally homogenous person without differences but see

everybody as benefitting in the same ways, benefitting from aid in the same ways, benefitting from relations in the same ways, being able to give to us even if not equally, or having the sincere intent to treat us as we treat them. Moral good is doing unto others as we would like to have done to ourselves.

Because this is a self-selected group of good guys with no differences that really matter, moral good applies equally to everybody.

Examples help clarify. We treat old people well now when we are young because one day we will be old someday and want to be treated well then. Treating old people well now is good practice for people our age so we will be ready when the time comes. We really will be like the other fellow eventually. Besides, old people are not useless even when they are really old. They know and understand, not only about the physical world but about the social world as well. We treat all children well because we want other people to treat our children well. Remember we are not limited to our own thin bag of skin but are also present in our kin. We share with people who had a bad day hunting and gathering because we know that someday they will share with us when we have a bad day. It is both good and practical to share. The fact that it is both good and practical is not against morality but is a key point about morality. We help people who have been hurt or even crippled for the same reasons we help old people. We might get hurt someday too, and we don't want to be abandoned in a ditch. Even hurt, we would have value. We want people to develop the logic of consideration so they don't overlook our value in case something happens to us. We do not steal, even when we could get away with it, because stealing goes against the spirit of what we feel and threatens to undermine all the practical benefit of morality and of living in a self-selected group of good guys. It is hard keeping track of lies and thefts. It is easier to be honest most of the time: "honesty is the best policy".

Seeing in terms of "applies equally to everybody" and the Golden Rule can cause us small losses but overall it is beneficial, and it is a mental posture and mental habit too. Once we know it is beneficial, we are bound to follow its internal logic.

Greater Good.

Now assume there are some differences that matter a bit, such as in natural ability, learned skills, experiences, or familiarity with a particular place to hunt or gather. The "welfare" of a person is the reproductive success of that person. An increase in the greater good leads to an increase in the overall sum of welfares (reproductive successes) of the group. An increase in the greater good leads to an increase in the total sum of the welfares of all the individuals in the group. The greater good might not lead to an equal increase for everybody. The greater good might even lead to some people losing a little in welfare while others increase. The total increase should still be more than the total decline. For example, the group might decide to follow and hunt a herd of cattle so as to have a steady supply of meat. Following the herd means giving up some of the best local places to gather vegetables and fruits for now, such as near the creek where pecans, blackberries, and leeks grow. People that are adept at gathering, but not adept at hunting cattle, might complain because they do not expect to do as well. Still, overall the group will do better, and so the group goes. People who would prefer to gather near the creek still go with the group as a whole because the group offers them security and because they hope they can get enough extra meat to help compensate for the lost vegetable food. They do not want to break up the group of self-selected good guys from which they benefit so much.

Sometimes we cannot increase the greater good but we can preserve it. In that case, the greater good is whatever preserves the total sum of welfares (reproductive successes) of all the individuals in the group. Sometimes we cannot even preserve the total welfare but can only minimize the reduction, or minimize the damage. Then, the greater good is what leads to the least reduction in the total sum of welfares of all the individuals in the group. In the second Mad Max movie, the “tribe” had to move to preserve their greater good. The moving tribe encountered marauders. Then, they had to sacrifice some members, almost including Max, so as to minimize the damage and keep as much as they could for as many as they could. We get both these themes in wartime.

When an idea about the greater good really does lead to the greater good without hurting any subgroup too much, then the greater good carries with it not only a feeling of practical good but of moral good too. The greater good is not only practically good but morally good. We feel morally good about successful ideas that make most people better off. This is an extension of the logic behind moral good.

The idea of the greater good is easy to understand but hard to carry out, and is open to abuse. The bad scenarios should be familiar to anybody who has suffered through office politics or church politics. How can anybody be sure that there will be more meat, and enough more meat to compensate for the lost gathered cabbages and mushrooms? Even if there is enough more meat on the whole, people can't be sure that there will be enough more for everybody to compensate. Even if there might have been enough more for nearly all people, if some people actually get less total food than before, even though the group as a whole, gets more, then the people who get less will not go along.

Sometimes an unscrupulous subgroup will suggest a plan for the greater good because they know it will favor them regardless of the real effect on the greater good. Suppose the Cheval family wants to follow the herd and hunt cattle because they are good at it, and don't really care about other families? An unscrupulous subgroup can suggest a plan that favors them comparatively because it hurts their rivals, like the families in the “Godfather” movies who wanted to sell heroin not only because they knew they could make money but also because they knew the Corleone family would not go along at first. What if the Cheval family wants to follow-and-hunt the herd because they are rivals with the Grangers, who are good at gathering vegetable foods in valleys, and adept at hunting small game, but are not adept at following herds? A switch to hunting herds would give the Cheval family the upper hand. In this case, the Granger family will complain about fairness. Then somebody has to figure out what really is better for the group as a whole.

Suppose the greater good really increases but some subgroup suffers so much that it really does seem unfair? Suppose following the herds really does increase total welfare but the Granger family will be all but wiped out? Even if the Granger family does not split the group, even if a mutually beneficial balance of strategies somehow persists, this still seems unfair. We would not want to be the Grangers even with an increase in the greater good. If we would not want to be them, then we go against the logic of moral good, and so something is wrong.

If we could know absolutely for sure when the sum of successes increased, who it hurt and how much, and who it helped and how much, then we would not have to worry about somebody pushing the greater

good too far (economists struggle to achieve this ideal of complete knowledge or to find ways around problems with it). In real life, we can't be sure, and people do push the idea too far.

Good and Greater Good Together.

Clashes between the good and greater good show they cannot be exactly the same. By itself, neither the greater good nor the good would sustain itself in human life. Only together, and yet only because they are different, can the greater good and the good remain a part of human life. They are distinct but sometimes supportive. By itself, neither the idea of the good or of the greater good could have evolved. Together they could evolve. To have evolved, they had to be similar but slightly different, and similar-but-different enough to be mutually sustainable.

It hurts when aspects of morality clash, especially when different groups use an aspect for their side, and each group carries both a grain of truth and untruth. Philosophers have sought one morality so as to avoid such conflicts. I think the conflicts are inevitable, if usually manageable. The clash cannot always be resolved in any simple logical way. In the long run, these conflicts help us sustain both the good and greater good.

Start with some modern conflicts to bring home the point: Americans say it is morally good to love your neighbor as yourself, and to help your neighbor as you would your own family. Yet when helping leads neighbors to become dependent on help, to abuse help, and to distort the help system, we say that the good is the enemy of the greater good. The abuse is not confined to individuals and families abusing the usual welfare system. Business firms abuse the system of corporate welfare. Then, helping out a firm hurts the greater good. All enabling is bad. Leaders say "Don't let the best be the enemy of the good", by which they mean don't let moral ideals get in the way of the practical greater good. After the terrorist attack of 9/11, the American government captured people that we thought were terrorists, and some were. We detained them illegally, and we tortured them for information. Some information helped stop future attacks. It was for the greater good. Yet Americans condemn illegal imprisonment and torture as evil. Accepting imprisonment and torture even in this case undermines all sense of morality. We might be able to find an acceptable compromise for a while but there is no logical way to fully settle this conflict.

The idea of the good can keep the idea of the greater good from going too far. In the example above, if the Granger family were hurt too much by changing strategies to follow the herds, we could use the logic of "we are like them" to see that pursuing the greater good sometime is morally wrong. Suppose it made some sense NOT to help old people, hurt people, or other people's children. We serve the greater good by being hard-hearted. This is not so far-fetched. Conservatives today routinely counsel us not to have a heart too big. The only way to find out is to try. Stop helping. But if we try and fail, then we broke up the group, hurt a lot of people, set a bad example, and whoever remains with us is likely not to help us in our time of need. To exclude the old, hurt, and children from help without a clearly compelling reason is just morally wrong regardless of any minor impracticality. The idea of the good slows down the idea of the greater good until we can be more astute about it. When we have real doubts about the greater good, it is better not to go against the logic of "applies equally to everybody" and "that could be me". Calls for urban development too often destroyed old neighborhoods in favor of merchants who did not need help nearly as much and whose increase in prosperity did not really lead to an increase in greater good. Then, a dose of moral logic and moral good would have been better.

On the other hand, the idea of the greater good can sometimes overcome self-interest masking as the good. In a peasant village, people discover they can make a good living raising fish, but they need a few fairly big ponds linked together to do it right. Nobody wants to donate his-her land, for good reasons, even though, by getting a share of all the production, he-she would certainly gain more than lose. They appeal to the idea of the good to stop the pond. In this case, unlike as with urban development, the project really benefits everybody, even eventually the landowners who sacrifice some of their land. In the end, people will see through “not in my backyard” and build the ponds.

When both the ideas of the moral good and greater good are available, and people think about them a little before acting, both can be a part of successful social life. When we use only one idea, we fail, the idea fails, and the idea disappears from successful social life.

Should.

It seems people would go along with good, right, greater good, or practical, or with most rules, especially with rules they themselves helped to make, but this is not always so. Why it is not so is not important here, only that we see it is not so, and see the need to do something about it.

The most obvious cases in which people don't do what they ought to do are compulsions and addictions, such as gambling, sex, alcohol and other drugs, and a bad temper. Even when we see we are destroying ourselves and loved ones, we keep on. Less disgusting but sometimes just as damaging are not eating right, not exercising, not seeing the doctor, being too concerned with appearance, being too concerned with sports or other entertainment, etc. Strangely, people do not go along with rules and practicality even when the path is clear and the penalty for straying obvious. People do not balance their accounts (balance their checkbooks) or pay their taxes. People buy things when they know they don't have the money to pay just because the credit card successfully makes it through the swipe machine.

We need a boost sometimes. “Should” is where we get the boost. “Should” provides the power behind what we ought to do, so as to make us do it most of the time. Other people can appeal to “should” to get us to do something if practical appeals are not enough. “Should” does not always work but it works enough so that susceptibility to it has become part of human nature.

“Should” can be used with any of the other moral aspects. We should do moral good, should seek the greater good, should follow rules, should do our duty, and should respect rights.

The facts that “should” puts the power into morality, and that “should” can be used with any aspect of morality, lends mistaken credence to the idea that morality is one simple thing. It might have led to misunderstanding among philosophers and biologists.

Rules.

The deep guiding logic of morality is “do unto others”, “applies equally to everybody”, and “I am like him-her”. This is too abstract for most daily life. From here, we have to go through logical steps to get to “do not steal”. Along with these deep principles, we also need some clear rules for more concrete situations. On the other hand, we can't have a rule for each particular situation with all the quibbles too.

We can't have this rule even if it is true in practice: "Do not steal on Sundays, and not from anybody helpless, weak, holy, important, or powerful. You can steal from your brother when you are pissed off at him". We need moderate rules, such as simply "do not steal".

So far, most people in the original human group have been similar enough. Here I change that condition. Now people do differ in abilities, achievements, wealth, power, and connections although not as much as in modern life.

We need rules because people differ. If everybody were similar, it would be easy to feel the life of other people and easy to see the validity of "do unto others". It is harder to understand the life of somebody more talented than us or in greater poverty than us, and hard to extend ourselves so we can "do unto others". We need more specific guidelines. With a rule like "do not steal" we know that it extends even to people not like us. It extends to cover situations in which we might be tempted to behavior that is not in accord with "applies equally to everybody" as when we a poor person steals from a rich person or a rich person steals from a poor person.

We need rules because good and greater good do not always coincide. We need formal guidelines for when to go with one or the other. We need a rule like "help old people even when they do not know who you are and even when their kin group is small". We need a rule like, "help all children when they are too young to know better, even the children of your enemies". We need a rule like "don't rape even the women of neighboring bands".

Rules and "should" go together. A rule is something we should follow. A rule implies an end toward which we (should) go, a way along which we (should) follow, or a pattern that we (should) extend. When we should do, we should do something. A rule tells us what it is that we should do. It is hard to "should do" a principle like the Golden Rule but it is possible to "should do" a mid-level rule like "you should give a week's pay per year to charity".

Right and Wrong.

Recall that competition is comparative and recall the balance of mutually beneficial strategies in a group of self-selected good guys. We do not want to destroy the balance. Anything that strongly spurs the sense of comparative competition might upset the balance. We have to have some competition but not too much. Also, our group of good guys likely has neighbor "others" that are not-so-good. Our group might not be so good to other neighboring groups either. We are always afraid of bad people arising within our group, especially if comparative competition gets nasty. We need to be able to focus the goodness of our group and guard against any non-goodness by others.

Now change conditions again but keep the idea of a self-selected group of good guys with a mutually beneficial balance of strategies. Now everybody is not alike, not even within our group. Differences are still not as large as in modern society but differences are not likely to disappear in short order, so that we are not likely to become like other people who are not like us already. We cannot easily see what it would be like to be someone else who is not already quite a bit like us. When we help someone who is not like us, we are not helping a reflection of ourselves at some other time and we are not indirectly helping ourselves. The rich are not likely to get poor right away. A boy is not likely to turn into a girl in this life.

Although the group is still “self-selected”, it is less free in reality than ideally. It is hard to leave because the alternatives are not great. The fact that it is hard to leave allows some subgroups to dominate others, such as some families dominating others. Subgroup dominance is a part of the lives of the primates (apes and monkeys) from which we evolved, so it has been a part of human life too from the beginning but it was not important in this story until now.

Under these conditions, “applies equally to everybody” and “the greater good” are not so clear. In terms familiar to modern Americans, are all rich people really “job creators” and is it really for the greater good if we absolve them of taxes? If a rich family gives to a poor person, poor people will be knocking on the door for weeks. Any rule that upsets the mutually beneficial balance of strategies is likely to undo the group, shrink the greater good, and lead to a morally bad practical fall for a lot of people. Yet to preserve the greater good too much opens the door to the same abuses as with the greater good. In hunter-gatherer terms, you should share a large kill or large berry patch with your neighbors regardless of family differences.

We need ideas or rules that meet the following requirements:

-The rule should apply equally to everybody within any subgroup that is made up of similar people, such as a family, specialized gazelle hunters, or gardeners. In other words, the rule should follow the ideal of “applies equally to everybody” and the Golden Rule at least within relevant subgroups. This ideal can serve as the standard by which other ideas can be judged even if it cannot apply in all cases.

-The rule should ideally apply equally to the whole group regardless of differences. This is an idealized extension of the rule above following the basic logic of morality (“applies equally to everybody”). This is what would have been the case if there were no lasting differences between people. This requirement cannot be met in practice. Still, it is good to hold as an ideal even if it can't be met in practice.

-The rule does not upset the mutually beneficial balance. The rule both preserves differences between kinds of people and the relations between different kinds of people, enough so that the mutually beneficial balance is not upset.

-If a rule might lead to a shift in mutually beneficial balanced strategies, the shift should be clear, it should be toward the greater good, and/or it should serve a deep moral principle such as “applies equally to everybody”.

-A rule should not serve one subgroup at the expense of others or serve as the tool of one subgroup in its relation with other subgroups.

-A rule should be in accord as much as possible with reciprocal altruism (in all variations) and inclusive fitness.

-In the original human situation, even with help from kin and friends, people largely determined their own fate, and reward was roughly proportional to effort and ability. That is what it means to say that natural selection is an automatic process. No rule should change the basic relation between reward, ability, and effort. Rules can soften the effect, at least briefly.

-In a situation where people are not all the same, the equivalent of “applies equally to everybody” and the Golden Rule is “there but for the grace of God go I”. That is what empathy means in a social situation where people differ. Ideals and rules have to reflect this feeling. The best way to reflect this feeling is to apply the Golden Rule and “applies equally to everybody” outside your closest reference subgroup. Although different kinds of people (hunting specialists, gathering specialists, rich, poor, fierce, artistic) might not expect to share exactly the same fate, they do share some general fate, their children might become like the neighbors, they might have been born otherwise, they can imagine what it is like to be like their neighbors, and sometimes things do change. Immigrants to the United States often rise in the socio-economic hierarchy. Hunters sometimes have to settle down to learn how to plant potatoes. In many Western movies, the old cattle barons had to learn to put up with spud farmers and new fences. Moral feelings can only evolve with sentience; one necessary component of sentience is empathetic imagination; and so moral beings have to be able to feel even for people unlike them.

Whatever idea, rule, or principle meets these ends is “right”. Whatever idea, rule, or principle subverts these ends is “wrong”. It is possible to say that whatever meets these ends is both good and right; and vice versa for bad and wrong. We can say that what is “fair” is “right”. We should expect overlap in moral ideas, especially because all share the same deep underlying logic of “applies equally” and the Golden Rule. I do not quibble or straighten out differences here. If we want a distinction, “good” refers to applying core moral principles under all conditions while “right” refers to what fits with core moral principles under particular conditions where people differ consistently.

These ends are not all compatible, any more than the good and greater good are always fully compatible, so the idea of “right” has some contradictions even within itself. If “right” had no contradictions, most social and moral problems would have been solved by now, and we would all understand perfectly the single essential meaning of “right”. Spike Lee would not have had to make a movie about doing the right thing. Still, because the various meanings of “right” share something in common, we can think about diverse situations in similar terms and we can work toward the right thing in diverse situations.

If “right” did not have several somewhat different meanings, it is unlikely that we would need an idea of right and unlikely that the idea of right would have been sustained in human evolution. This is the same relation as between “good” and “greater good”, and probably between all the moral components. That is a topic for elsewhere.

Rights and Responsibilities (Duties).

The idea of “applies equally” tells us what to do and how to make rules. It does not guarantee that, if we do to other people as we would like them to do to us, they will do to us as they would like to have done to them. It does not guarantee a return of good behavior. The idea of rights and duties does guarantee at least some back-and-forth good behavior (reciprocity), especially with the force of “should” and the threat of enforcement behind the idea. The idea of rights and duties completes the other moral ideas by making sure they stay part of a mutually-reinforcing system. It ties morality into one whole system.

American English uses one word for two ideas. “Right” can mean “fitting” as above. “Rights” can also mean “what I can expect to do and what I can expect other people to let me do”. “Responsibilities” or

“duties” are “what I should do based on what I am, who I am, or what position I hold, in relation to other people (beings or nature)”. I think Indo-European languages, such as English, generally have one word for the two ideas but I don’t know enough to say for sure. Americans understand there are two ideas, and we can always distinguish the two ideas in use when we have to. Other languages use two or more words for the distinct ideas. Thai has “thuuk” for “right”, “sit” for “rights”, and “naathi” for “responsibility”. So we can accept that there are distinct important ideas even though we use the same word.

The ideas of “right and wrong” and “rights and duties” depend on distinct roles and situations. The ideas refer back to some distinct natural types. The roles and situations are a combination of natural types with what happens in the mutually beneficial balance of strategies in a self-selected group of good guys. The idea of “rights” depends on the natural type of a person. The idea of rights depends on the presence of different natural kinds of people (persons) in a group. A person has rights in the group in relation to other people in the group, especially people that are similar but not exactly the same. A member of the Smith family has rights against members of other families. A mother has rights as a mother, and she has duties towards her children and toward other members of the family just because she is a mother. The Smith family has rights and duties against the Jones family, especially if some of their children have recently married. The link to natural types might be why some cultures get by with the same word for both “right” and “rights”.

The ideas of “right” and “rights and duties” are not limited to pure natural types. Potters and tanners are not natural types but both might have rights and duties toward each other. In the long distant past, the rights and duties might have been modeled after natural types such as “siblings” but can grow beyond the original model to be a relation in their own terms. That is partly what human imagination is for.

In some cases, a person can have rights but not duties. A small child has rights but has few or no duties. Sometimes children are happy when they first get duties because it means “I am big now”. In the large majority of cases, “rights” strongly implies “duties”. “I got a right to sing the blues. I got a right to feel low down”. “Yes, but only if you really got hurt, only if you don’t ‘cry wolf’, and only if you think your song can really make us feel better rather than worse”. Usually rights and duties are symmetrical if not exactly mirror images. A mother as a mother has duties and rights too but her duties are mostly toward her children while her rights are mostly between her and other adults. As her children grow older, they too will have duties to her, and she will have rights (expectations) from them.

In the large majority of cases, rights and duties imply one another. In the case of rights and duties, it is easy to see how we cannot have one without the other, and so why one could not have evolved without the other. If all moral ideas were like rights and duties, then the general argument about morality being made up of distinct but mutually dependent components would be easy to make. The relation between moral good and the greater good is like the relation between rights and duties but not exactly alike and not as obvious. The same is true of all the components to each other although I do not elaborate here.

The close tie between rights and duties is evident when one is stressed to the neglect of the other. Since the 1970s, Americans have strongly cultivated rights while forgetting the necessary companion idea of duty-responsibility. We have gone too far in one direction. Only with children or handicapped people can it be a one-way street. When we invoke rights, we should think also about what duties go along with our

rights. If we cannot live up to the responsibilities, we should not expect the rights. Especially as citizen in a democracy, we have duties that go along with rights. Simply being a person does give us some rights but it also gives us some responsibilities. If we invoke the idea of rights without also living up to our responsibilities, then we necessarily treat ourselves as children and should expect other people to treat us as children too.

If people in the original human setting were able to abuse rights and duties flagrantly for their own benefit to the harm of others, or were able to abuse any of the other major components of morality, then none of the components could have evolved. Of course, people do abuse almost everything a little bit but other people keep us within working limits. We can assume that all the components of morality, and morality as a whole, were a net benefit despite some minor losses sometimes. Otherwise, they could not have evolved. This is why morality and practicality usually coincide, and why it is wrong to think of them as contraries opposed to each other.

Natural Types.

The link of natural types to right and wrong, and rights and duties, raises issues for the evolution of morality. I don't think the issues invalidate the analysis I have given here but I need to mention them. Some anthropologists do not recognize natural types at all (I am not sure how many biologists recognize them). Some anthropologists say all types are given to us by our culture or society only. I am not sure but I think some anthropologists would say that even the ideas of "moral good", "greater good", "should", "rules", "right and wrong" and "rights and duties" are not natural types but are present only in some cultures. I disagree. Some natural types have firm grounding in the evolved lives of social animals, and, on top of that, some natural types have firm grounding in the evolved social life of early humans. See the Bibliography. The ideas of "male", "female", "mother", "child", "mother and child", "young", and "adult" are likely hardwired into most mammalian brains. I think the major aspects of morality were hardwired into human brains by evolution.

Of course, even if we do accept some natural types, culture and society clearly modify natural types and add types of their own that take on a status like natural types. I think it would not be possible to make up types unless we began with at least some natural types as a base. As humans accumulated technology, they developed types that had to do with specific ways of making a living and specific orders of power. The idea of "mother" is similar across most cultures and situations but not exactly the same. A mother in America is not the same as a mother in China or in Thailand. A mother is similar among most peasants but ideas about her vary according to whether the peasants raise wheat or rice. The idea of a leader is present in all cultures but the leader is not the same in India as in America. The leader is not the same in democratic Iran as in theocratic Iran. The ideas of "hunter" and "gatherer" likely were almost hardwired into the brains of early humans but the idea of "farmer" certainly was not, yet farmers around the world have traditional rights and duties. The rights and duties of farmers are both similar and different between America, France, England, Japan, China, and Thailand. It is hard to separate out what might be natural, what comes from the strategies of making a living and of power, and what comes of culture. Even so, we can still sense that the ideas of right and wrong, rights, and duties, depend on types and that some of the types have a firm grounding in our basic evolved nature.

Fairness etc.

I don't know if the aspects of morality given so far are all the core major aspects. There are other ideas in morality, such as fairness and justice. I don't know if other ideas of morality can be made up from the aspects given so far. By pushing, we can get some. "Fairness" is allotting resources, including attention, according to type and according to aspects of the current situation that might modify considerations of type. It is "only fair" to allot cookies to children almost equally but with some concern given to age and weight. It is "only fair" ideally to allot attention to children without regard to age, weight, and personality; it is not possible to do this in practice. I found that the ideas above let me work my way through many moral issues. I am not sure it is worth trying to force all of morality into one minimal set as with postulates and theorems in mathematics, especially if the situation is more like the sense of taste than of sight. Worrying about this issue kept me from writing down anything for well over a decade. Here is not the place to go into it. This concern also does not invalidate anything said here.

Mixed Moral Beings Again, Impassable Gate.

Even self-selected groups of good guys have people of mixed moral aptitudes. The fact that morality is not one thing but several makes the situation more mixed. Some people have a strong sense of "applies equally to everybody" while other people see in terms of the Golden Rule or feel empathy. Some people feel moral good and are adept at seeking it while other people are adept at the greater good or at the feeling of right. How the compound nature of morality complicates the mix in self-selected groups of good guys has not been very well investigated yet.

Evolution can bring us to see moral ideals but it cannot make us live up to them fully. Evolution leads us to understand "applies equally to everybody" and the Golden Rule but it also makes sure that we cannot fully comply. Evolution leads us to understand the idea of "do the right thing" but also makes sure that we do not always do the right thing. Evolution brings us to a great gate through which we can see another world but then makes sure we cannot walk through the gate.

Our mixed moral aptitudes complicate self-perpetuating situations, both good and bad. When people are in the middle, as we are most of the time, our mixed moral aptitudes probably help keep us in the middle. It is hard for one personality type or one idea of goodness to dominate and to swing the entire group over to thorough goodness. People are not good enough to become too good. In the same way, luckily, also usually we are not bad enough to become too bad. Normal people might do bad things from time to time but few of us want to become thoroughly bad, and most of us can be led to correct our behavior. Most of us can see where bad behavior leads and so veer off before we get too far.

It might be nearly impossible to sustain a very good situation (at least outside the affluent suburbs) but unfortunately it is possible to sustain some very bad situations. Our mixed moral aptitudes sometimes are not enough to pull us back. In fact, our mixed moral aptitudes can be turned to the "dark side" as when righteous indignation does not serve primarily to ferret out bad behavior but as a tool in attacking other people. We know that "applies equally to everybody" can serve to bring people together and so we know when violating it can humiliate and subjugate people, as when one ethnic group finds ways to apply laws unequally so as to disgrace and dominate another ethnic group. In a scene made famous in a Bruce Lee movie and in several later Chinese remakes, a foreign subjugating power had posted a sign at a park in a Chinese city that said, "No dogs or Chinese allowed". Adept bad people fully understand "divide and

conquer". Always I am reminded of ethnic relations in America and the fault on all sides. The desire for the greater good is one great support for fascism.

Despite a few dark episodes, all in all, people are pretty good. We are usually more than good enough for normal situations and problems. We just need sharp clear reminders every so often. Unfortunately, our evolved moral skills are probably not good enough for the most important challenges we face today and in the near future. I am not sure our innate human decency is enough for the future. I think evolved human skills are not enough to handle the complexities of modern participatory democracy on a planet where population is growing, expectations skyrocketing, resources dwindling, and nature is devastated. It is unlikely we will sink into post-apocalyptic barbarism but we probably will lose the charm and grace that is core to being human.