

HENRY SIDGWICK'S RECONCILIATION IN ETHICS

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Abstract:

Dalam bidang etika, dua pemikiran yang bertentangan satu sama lain selama lebih dari seratus tahun (abad XXVII – XVIII), yaitu antara Intuisionisme dan Utilitarianisme. Henry Sidgwicklah (1838-1900) yang telah berhasil mendamaikan pertikaian dua sekolah pemikiran tersebut. Utilitarianisme mengoreksi dan menambah dimensi penting pada etika yang menekankan kemampuan manusia, yaitu aspek *conscience*, kesadaran (intuisionisme) dan sebaliknya. Menurutnya, kesenjangan logika di dalam utilitarianisme hanya dapat diatasi oleh intuisionisme. Tidaklah cukup untuk melihat bahwa kebahagiaan ialah tujuan akhir rasional semata bagi agen yang sadar seperti diyakini oleh utilitarianisme. Sebaliknya, intuisionisme membutuhkan utilitarianisme. Dua intuisi primer nalar, kebijaksanaan (*prudence*) dan kebajikan (*benevolence*) selalu mengarah kepada kebaikan (*good*). Kesimpulan Sidgwick adalah bahwa dua sekolah pemikiran ini bukan hanya hadir bersama dan saling bertentangan, tetapi saling membutuhkan baik secara logis maupun praktis.

Keywords: Intuitionism, utilitarianism, conscience, prudence, benevolence, good, William Whewell, John Stuart Mill.

In order to understand the developments in Henry Sidgwick's ethical discussion, we need to know how things stood between two conflicting schools of thought, Intuitionism and Utilitarianism, which dominated the moral philosophy in the British School of XVII and XVIII centuries.

In this section we will indicate what their main ideas were, offer an account of the controversial exchange which took place between two of their protagonists (William Whewell and John Stuart Mill) and conclude with an attempt at situating Henry Sidgwick within the controversy.

1. Two Conflicting Schools of Thought

1.1. Intuitionism

W. D. Hudson says that "Ethical intuitionism is here taken to be the

view that normal human beings have an immediate awareness of moral values"¹. As we will understand the term, Intuitionism is the view that human beings possess a faculty, commonly called conscience, which enables them to discern directly what is morally right or wrong, good or evil. But those who have taken this view have not always agreed among themselves in their account of the faculty concerned.

There was a great deal of debate amongst intuitionists as to whether *conscience* should be conceived as a kind of sense or an aspect of reason. Anthony Ashley Cooper Shaftesbury and Francis Hutcheson were of the former opinion². Under the influence John Locke's empiricist epistemology³, they inferred that the faculty which recognises the moral properties of actions or states of affairs must be some sort of sense. As all we know about the physical world comes to us through the perceptions of our physical senses, right and wrong, good and evil, must come to us through the intuitions of a moral sense.

Other intuitionists, such as Ralph Cudworth⁴, Samuel Clarke⁵, John Balguy⁶, and Richard Price⁷ took the view that the moral faculty is reason. Influenced by Cartesian philosophy⁸, they concluded that conscience must

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- 1 W. D. Hudson, *Ethical Intuitionism*, Macmillan, London 19702 (1967), p.1. Cf. Jeff McMahan, "Moral Intuition", in Hugh LaFollette ((ed.), *The Blackwell Guide to Ethical Theory*, Blackwell Publishers Inc., Malden, Massachusetts - USA 2000, 93-95.
 - 2 *Ibid.* Cf. Thomas Reid, "Essays on the Active Powers of Man", in *British Moralists II: Hume-Bentham and Index*, edited by D. D. Raphael, Hackett Publishing Company Inc., Indianapolis/Cambridge 1991, 274.
 - 3 The ultimate constituents of our knowledge are simple ideas of sensation. Cf. John Locke, "Essays on the Law of Nature", in *British Moralists I: Hobbes-Gay*, edited by D. D. Raphael, Hackett Publishing Company Inc., Indianapolis/Cambridge 1991, 160-166.
 - 4 Ralph Cudworth, "A Treatise concerning Eternal and Immutable Morality", in *British Moralists I...*, *Cit.*, p.112: "And therefore if there were no natural justice, that is, if the rational or intellectual nature in itself were indetermined and unobliged to any thing, and so destitute of all morality, ...".
 - 5 Samuel Clarke, "A Discourse of Natural Religion", in *British Moralists I...*, *Cit.*, 200: "For originally and in reality, it is as natural and (morally speaking) necessary, that the will should be determined in every action by the reason of the thing, and the right of the case; ...".
 - 6 John Balguy, "The Foundation of Moral Goodness", in *British Moralists I...*, *Cit.*, 392: "... we must certainly think less highly and less honourably of it, than we should do if we looked upon it as *rational*; for I suppose it will readily be allowed, that *reason* is the nobler principle: ...".
 - 7 Richard Price, "A Review of the Principal Questions in Morals", in *British Moralists II...*, *Cit.*, 133-134: "... that right and wrong denote only the relations of actions to will and law, or to happiness and misery, there could be no dispute about the faculty that perceives right and wrong, since it must be owned by all, that these relations are objects of the investigations of *reason*".
 - 8 W. D. Hudson, *Ethical Intuitionism*, *Cit.*, 24.

be reason in its intuitive aspect. They claimed that the rightness of an act must be a new simple moral idea supplied by the understanding.

Some philosophers took the view that conscience may be described as both reason and sense. Joseph Butler spoke of it as our “moral reason, moral sense, ...”⁹ and Thomas Reid said, in similar vein, that conscience is “original power of the mind”¹⁰ which supplies us in the first place with our “original conceptions of right and wrong in conduct”¹¹. It is comparable in this regard to a sense such as sight or hearing and supplies us in the second place with our “original judgements that this conduct is right, that is wrong”¹² and to the understanding which makes us aware of mathematical axioms. What they wanted to emphasise above all was, to quote Reid, that conscience has “the active powers of the human mind”¹³ or, as Butler put it, “Had it strength, as it has right; had it power, as it has manifest authority; it would absolutely govern the world”¹⁴.

One of the most distinguished representatives of intuitionism in the latter part of the nineteenth century, William Whewell, was totally committed to the view that moral faculty is reason. Reason “directs us to rules”, he said, and the adjective “right” signifies “conformable to rule”. Reason’s moral function is to direct us to a “supreme” rule of human action “to do what is right and to abstain from doing what is wrong”, and various “subordinate” rules “which determine what is right and what is wrong”. Reason is “the light of man’s constitution which reveals him to himself ... this light by being light, is fit to guide us; as in the world without, so in the world within us, the light, by guiding us, proves that it is its office to guide us”¹⁵.

The intuitionists would agree that an action, in order to be virtuous, must be one which the agent has freely chosen to do because his conscience approves of it. However, they would differ among themselves that an enlightened conscience will approve. The moral sense philosophers thought that the motive or intention with which certain kinds of action are done is what conscience judges. Francis Hutcheson, for example, said that actions are virtuous if they aim at producing as much general happiness as possible¹⁶.

9 Joseph Butler, “Dissertation II: Of the Nature of Virtue”, in *British Moralists I...*, Cit., 379. Cf. W. D. Hudson, *Ethical Intuitionism*, Cit., 29-33.

10 Thomas Reid, “Essays on the Active Powers of Man”, in *British Moralists II...*, Cit., 274.

11 *Ibid.*, 275.

12 *Ibid.*

13 *Ibid.*, 283.

14 Joseph Butler, “Fifteen Sermons”, in *British Moralists I...*, Cit., 354.

15 William Whewell, *Elements of Morality, including Polity*, Deighton, Bell, Cambridge 18644 (18451), 65-77.

16 Francis Hutcheson, “An Inquiry Concerning Moral Good and Evil”, in *British Moralists I...*,

1.2. Utilitarianism

Utilitarianism is the view that acts are right in so far as they bring about an increase in human happiness and wrong if they produce misery. William Paley believes that virtue is “doing good to mankind in obedience to the will of God and for the sake of everlasting happiness”¹⁷. He tried to combine egoistic psychological hedonism and altruistic ethical hedonism by arguing that the motivating force of human action is both a desire for one’s own happiness and the obligation of attaining it. Once we know that God will bestow eternal bliss only upon those who promote this general happiness and seek that goal. However, the founder of utilitarianism is generally taken to have been Jeremy Bentham and its most widely read exponent is John Stuart Mill.

There is a most important difference between what Bentham denied and what Mill affirmed concerning conscience. Bentham’s denial was epistemological: we do not know moral truths by intuition. Mill’s affirmation was psychological: we do have feelings of moral approbation or disapprobation.

The external, objective, scientific, standard of morality, which Bentham and Mill said that intuitionism lacked, they thought to supply in their principle of utility. Bentham would define it in these terms:

By the principle of utility is meant that principle which approves or disapproves of every action whatsoever, according to the tendency which it appears to have to augment or diminish the happiness of the party whose interest is in question: or, what is the same thing in other words, to promote or to oppose that happiness. I say of every action

Cit., 284: “action is best, which procures the greatest happiness for the greatest numbers”. Against Hutcheson’s exclusive approval of benevolence, Joseph Butler, “Dissertation II: Of the Nature of Virtue”, in *British Moralists I...*, *Cit.*, 383-384, would argue that if we could make either of two men happy and only one of them was our friend or benefactor, then it would be our duty to make him happy rather than the other man—a fact from which he would conclude that motives such as friendship or gratitude, as well as benevolence, can make actions right; and others such as deceit, violence or injustice, as well as malevolence, can make them wrong. The rational intuitionists for their part took the view that what conscience approves of its actions which initiate certain first principles of morality. But there was some slight difference of opinion among them as to what exactly these first principles are. Samuel Clarke, “A Discourse of Natural Religion”, in *British Moralists I...*, *Cit.*, 192-212 listed three: duty to God, which consists in worshipping and obeying him; duty to others, which comprises both equity and love; and duty to self, which is the duty to preserve one’s own life and develop one’s own talents. Richard Price, “A Review of the Principal Questions in Morals”, in *British Moralists II...*, *Cit.*, 175-189, added to this list gratitude, which is duty to benefactors: veracity, which includes promise-keeping; and justice.

17 William Paley, “The Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy” in *British Moralists II...*, *Cit.*, 257.

whatsoever; and therefore not only of every action of a private individual, but of every measure of government¹⁸.

And Mill, in these,

The creed which accepts as the foundation of morals *utility*, or the *greatest happiness principle*, holds that actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to promote the reverse of happiness. By 'happiness' is intended pleasure, and the absence of pain; by unhappiness, pain, and the privation of pleasure¹⁹.

For both Bentham and Mill "happiness" meant pleasure and the absence of pain. Their utility principle laid it down that, if an action brings about in sum more pleasure than pain, its moral value is positive; if more pain than pleasure, negative; and if an equal quantity of both, neutral²⁰. Bentham and Mill were at one in their hedonic consequentialism but they had somewhat differing ideas about the nature of pleasure and pain. Bentham said that pleasures (and pains) are equal. They differ from one another only quantitatively, "Prejudice apart, the game of push-pin is of equal value with the arts and sciences of music and poetry"²¹. In saying this, he meant to insist that no pleasure is intrinsically better than any other pleasure. Mill denies that either pleasures or pains are homogeneous²². They differ from one another in quality as well as quantity. Some kinds of pleasure are better than others, not because they are more pleasurable, but because they are pleasures of a higher or more valuable kind. Mill asserts that the higher pleasures are superior in quality and intrinsically more desirable.

It is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied; better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied. And if the fool, or the pig, is of a different opinion, it is because they only know their own side of the question. The other party to the comparison knows both sides²³.

The question arises as to whether the views of Bentham and Mill about our duty to distribute happiness in certain ways are consistent with either their psychological or ethical hedonism. As psychological hedonists, they

18 Jeremy Bentham, "An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation", in *British Moralists II...*, Cit., 314.

19 John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*, Great Books in Philosophy, Prometheus Books, New York 1987, 16-17.

20 Cf. George E. Moore, *Ethics*, Williams & Norgate, London 1947, 40-42.

21 Jeremy Bentham, "The Rationale of Reward", in J. Bowring (ed.), *The Works of Jeremy Bentham*, vol.2, Russell & Russell, New York 1962, 253.

22 John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*, Cit., 21.

23 John Stuart Mill, "Essays on Ethics, Religion and Society", in J. M. Robson (ed.), *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, vol. X, Routledge, London and New York 19962 (1969), 212.

both believed that the motive from which each of us acts is a desire for his/her pleasure. We should increase the pleasure of others because by so doing, we can increase our own. As ethical hedonists, Bentham and Mill would have said that happiness is the sole good, but the distribution of happiness in any specific way is not itself happiness.

2. William Whewell versus John Stuart Mill

Whewell attacked Bentham's utilitarianism in his *Lectures on the History of Moral Philosophy in England*²⁴. Mill responded just as forthrightly with criticism of Whewell's intuitionism in his "Dr. Whewell on Moral Philosophy" and subsequently in J. S. Mill's *Dissertations and Discussions*²⁵. We will mention three main criticisms of utilitarianism, delivered by Whewell, to each of which Mill replied so that we can get a clear idea of Sidgwick's ethics.

The first of Whewell's criticism²⁶ was that we can never know that we have taken all the consequences of an action into account when we are passing judgement upon it. It may have an infinite number of consequences of which we are completely ignorant. And we cannot estimate with any certainty, or even probability: whether or not it will in the end cause a greater surplus of pleasure over pain than any alternative action which was open to the agent. Given the principle of utility this means that we can never say with confidence whether an act is right or wrong.

Mill replied in two ways. Firstly, he claimed that no one ever supposed that we could calculate all the consequences of an action. But this does not mean that there is no point in considering the consequences which we can discern. According to Mill, Whewell's argument "commits the error of proving too much"²⁷. It sets out to show that morality cannot be reduced to mere prudence and ends up by implying that there is no such thing as prudence. Do we not have to decide in some way or other in every day lives what it would be prudent to do? Secondly, Mill asserts that those classes of actions can be calculated with assurance, although the consequences of individual acts may be unpredictable. For example, we may not know whether an individual murder will cause more happiness than mi-

24 William Whewell, *Lectures on the History of Moral Philosophy in England and Additional Lectures on the History of Moral Philosophy*, Thoemmes, Bristol 19902 (1852), 215-230.

25 John Stuart Mill, "Whewell on Moral Philosophy", in J. M. Robson (ed.), *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, vol. X, Cit., 167-201.

26 William Whewell, *Lectures on the History of Moral Philosophy in England ...*, Cit., 210-214.

27 John Stuart Mill, "Whewell on Moral Philosophy", in J. M. Robson (ed.), *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, vol. X, Cit., 180.

sery. But we know well that if murder became widespread, this would greatly increase the wretchedness of mankind. Every case of murder is an infringement of the general moral rule which forbids it. A sufficient number of such infringements would undermine this rule and open the flood-gates to misery²⁸.

Whewell's second criticism was that some happiness is derived from 'moral elements' and therefore we cannot say that all morality is derived from happiness, as Bentham wanted to do. What did Whewell mean by some happiness being derived from moral elements? Firstly, the two kinds of approval are the logical precondition of this happiness which we feel. Secondly, where this happiness is concerned it cannot be said that any action can be thought virtuous if it causes happiness, because the action must first be thought virtuous in order to cause this kind of happiness. Whewell is contending that if Bentham tries to include happiness which is derived from moral elements in his felicific calculations then what ground could he have simply as a utilitarian, for leaving it out? And then he is trapped in a vicious circle. Bentham is maintaining in effect both, that happiness is the precondition of virtue and that virtue is the precondition of happiness. Whewell accused Bentham of trying to escape from this vicious circle by attributing the moral elements in happiness to education and public opinion²⁹. But there is no such hiding place. What is moral education, if not instruction in the distinction between virtue and vice? What does public opinion consider that a source of morals consist of, if not judgements as to what is virtuous or vicious? Moral education and public opinion about morality presuppose that certain actions are thought virtuous, just as much as happiness derived from moral elements does. Bentham is caught again in the same vicious circle. There Bentham must stay so long as he looks for "a morality which does not depend on a moral basis"³⁰ but merely on the natural fact that certain courses of action may cause happiness.

Mill's reply³¹ to Whewell's second criticism is Bentham's account of the origin of the moral elements in happiness. People desire their happiness. Consequently, they like other people who promote it and dislike those who endanger it. Each of us becomes aware of himself as liked or disliked by other people. It gives us satisfaction to be liked, and dissatisfaction to be disliked. Our specifically moral feelings of being worthy of moral approval or disapproval – feelings like guilt or remorse, integrity or virtuousness –

28 *Ibid.*, 181-182.

29 William Whewell, *Lectures on the History of Moral Philosophy in England ...*, Cit., 217: "he has recourse to the dimness of childhood and to the confusion of the crowd, to conceal his defect of logic".

30 *Ibid.*

31 *Ibid.*, 184-185.

“naturally arise” from these feelings of being liked or disliked by other people.

That is a question of metaphysics, not ethics, said Mill dismissively. Bentham recognised that there are moral feelings and prescribed that they should be trained to approve only of utility, but he did not trouble himself with the question of how they are related to our other feelings. Whewell’s doubts about how Bentham can account for the “moral elements” in happiness are misconceived. Mill said: “Dr. Whewell’s attempt to find anything illogical or incoherent in this theory, only proves that he does not yet understand it”³². But Whewell had put his finger on a problem about utilitarianism which has continued to trouble philosophers down to this day. How can utilitarians cope with the fact that moral feelings of satisfaction and dissatisfaction are on a different level logically from other such feelings?

Whewell’s third criticism³³ is an attempt at *reductio ad absurdum*³⁴. Bentham and Mill extended the utility principle to include all sentient beings. Whewell is ready enough to agree that we should not be cruel to animals. They are “objects of morality”³⁵ in that sense. But any duties we may have to them are “upon a very different footing in morality”³⁶ from those we have to our fellow men. He points out that if the utility principle is extended to animals as well as to men, it could on occasion be “our duty to increase the pleasures of pigs or of geese rather than those of men, if we were sure that the pleasure we could give them were greater than the pleasures of men”³⁷. Bentham had accepted this implication without demur.

32 John Stuart Mill, “Whewell on Moral Philosophy”, in J. M. Robson (ed.), *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, vol. X, *Cit.*, 185.

33 William Whewell, *Lectures on the History of Moral Philosophy in England ...*, *Cit.*, 223. Cf. John Stuart Mill, “Whewell on Moral Philosophy”, in J. M. Robson (ed.), *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, vol. X, *Cit.*, 185.

34 Cf. Nicholas Rescher, *Philosophical Reasoning: A Study in the Methodology of Philosophizing*, Blackwell Publishers, Massachusetts-USA & Oxford-UK 2001, 230-231. In clarifying the bearing of context on thesis prioritisation, it is helpful to begin with a special case of probative reasoning that lies close to logical theory itself, namely argumentation by *reduction ad absurdum*. *Reductio* is a matter of introducing a belief-contravening supposition. It is obvious that in situations of *reductio* reasoning mere assumptions must yield the right of way to plausibly validated contentions. In situations of *reductio ad absurdum* reasoning the operative principle of procedure is: “Restore consistency while preserving at all cost what is already established, sacrificing, if need be, your initial conflict-generating assumption to this body of preestablished fact”. A rule to the effect that established propositions prevail over mere assumptions, come what may, makes conflict resolution in these *reductio ad absurdum* cases a straightforward matter. To be sure, those who join the mathematical intuitionists in rejecting *reductio* argumentation altogether would have no need for such a rule.

35 William Whewell, *Lectures on the History of Moral Philosophy in England ...*, *Cit.*, 223.

36 *Ibid.*

37 *Ibid.*

But Whewell remarks contemptuously, most persons would consider it “not a tolerable doctrine that we may sacrifice the happiness of men, provided we can in that way produce an overplus of pleasure to cats, dogs and hogs, not to say lice and fleas”³⁸. He holds that “there is a tie which binds together all human beings, quite different from that which binds them to cats and dogs ...”³⁹. Morality must be conceived as an aspect of man’s “human capacity” not his “mere animal condition”⁴⁰.

Mill⁴¹ hit back at Whewell’s third criticism. He accuses Whewell of extending to animals those “superstitions of selfishness”, which once made most people think that the happiness of white men is more important than that of slaves, or of feudal lords than that of serfs. He asserts that he is willing to stake his whole defence of utilitarianism against Whewell’s intuitionist attack on this one issue,

Granted that any practice causes more pain to animals than it gives pleasure to man, is that practice moral or immoral? ... if, exactly in proportion as human beings raise their heads out of the slough of selfishness, they do not with one voice answer ‘immoral’, let the morality of the principle of utility be for ever condemned⁴².

3. Henry Sidgwick’s Reconciliation

Sidgwick explored the possibility of a rapprochement between the two conflicting schools of thought. He came to the conclusion that the antithesis, commonly supposed to exist between intuitionism and utilitarianism can be “transcended” or “discarded”⁴³.

3.1. Utilitarianism Requires Intuitionism

According to Henry Sidgwick, the reasons are its logical and practical completion.

Sidgwick was familiar with the hostile criticism of utilitarianism⁴⁴. In *The Methods of Ethics* he echoed, in particular, the accusation that John Stuart Mill committed the fallacy of composition. Sidgwick thinks that Mill had

38 *Ibid.*, 225.

39 *Ibid.*, 226.

40 *Ibid.*

41 John Stuart Mill, “Whewell on Moral Philosophy”, in J. M. Robson (ed.), *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, vol. X, *Cit.*, 185-186.

42 *Ibid.*, 187.

43 *ME*, 472.

44 Jerome B. Schneewind, *Sidgwick’s Ethics ...*, *Cit.*, 178-188.

revealed the “logical gap”⁴⁵ in utilitarianism, which only intuitionism can fill⁴⁶. It is not enough to have seen that happiness is the only rational ultimate end for conscious agents.

Mill’s proof is needed to bridge the logical gap between the natural fact⁴⁷ and the moral principle⁴⁸. Sidgwick says, “there is a gap in the expressed argument, which can, I think, only be filled by some such proposition as that I have above tried to exhibit as the intuition of Rational Benevolence”⁴⁹. This can supply the requisite logical justification of utilitarianism because, (i) being self-evident it requires no further justification itself and (ii) being a principle about what “each one is morally bound to do”, it leaves no gap between “is” and “ought”. Put this principle together with the fundamental doctrine that happiness is the good – the rational grounds for which we have just considered – and utilitarianism can be validly deduced. Thus Sidgwick thought utilitarianism needs intuitionism in order to justify its fundamental principle that general happiness and not simply happiness as such, is the good at which we ought to aim.

As for its practical completion, Sidgwick evidently thought that utilitarianism needs to be embodied in the specific duties which make up “dogmatic intuitionism”, if it is to be a practical code of behaviour. He remarks, such specialized affections as the present organization of society normally produces afford the best means of developing in most persons a more extended benevolence to the degree to which they are capable of feeling it⁵⁰.

He claims, in effect, that the ends of utilitarianism can best be achieved by fulfilling the duties, domestic and otherwise, which common sense morality enjoins. Utilitarianism as Mill remarked requires its “secondary principles”⁵¹. The point is not simply that this reliance on common sense is possible but that it is necessary for utilitarians. In that sense, utilitarianism in practice needs the deposit of common sense morality which intuitionism has preserved.

45 John Stuart Mill had tried to prove that general happiness is desirable (in the sense of “ought to be desired”) from the fact that each person’s happiness is desired by that person. This is inadmissible, of course, because “ought” cannot be deduced from “is”. But even if it could be, the so-called proof would not work because the fact that each man desires a part of the general happiness. It does not establish that anyone desires the general happiness.

46 Cf. ME7, 388.

47 Each of us desires our own happiness.

48 We all ought to desire the general happiness.

49 ME7, 388.

50 *Ibid.*, 405.

51 John Stuart Mill, “Whewell on Moral Philosophy”, in J. M. Robson (ed.), *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, vol. X, *Cit.*, p. 173: “... the first use to be made of his ultimate principle, was to erect on it, as a foundation, *secondary* or *middle principles*, capable of serving as premises

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So far as logical completion is concerned, Sidgwick's argument was to this effect⁵². Two of the "primary intuitions of reason"⁵³, namely prudence and benevolence as stated below, contain a reference to the good. In order to understand these intuitions, we must know what the good means. Does it mean virtue? If we give it that meaning we involve ourselves in a logical circle. Within intuitionism many of the duties, which constitute what is meant by virtue, are implicitly subordinate to prudence and benevolence. If we define the good as virtue, we are in effect saying that practising virtue is realising the good and realising the good is practising virtue. In order to escape from this vicious circle we must abandon the idea of virtue as the good and conceive of the latter as an end to which virtue is simply the means. It may therefore be said that the question with which intuitionism leaves us in the end is, "what is the good?" It requires us to have some rationally justified conception of the good other than virtue.

As for practical completion, intuitionism needs utilitarianism. According to Sidgwick, intuitionism is apparent in the "unconscious"⁵⁴ or "latent"⁵⁵ utilitarianism of common sense morality⁵⁶. The "dogmatic" intuitionism of common moral reasoning is frequently supplemented in practice by utilitarian calculations. Sidgwick offered numerous examples⁵⁷: in working out the precise mutual duties of husbands and wives or the precise circumstances in which promises should be kept, the truth spoken, and so on. People normally decide such things by "a forecast of the effects on human happiness" of various solutions. Although utilitarianism is not the "germinal" method by which ordinary people decide moral questions, it is the "adult" method to which the development of common sense morality has always been tending⁵⁸. In practice, as in logic, intuitionism is incomplete without utilitarianism.

for a body of ethical doctrine not derived from existing opinions, but fitted to be their test".
Italics are mine.

52 Cf. *ME*, 367-378.

53 See "The Three Fundamental Principles" in the following Chapter Two, 2.2.5.

54 *ME*, 420.

55 *ME*, 418, 424, 452.

56 Cf. *ME*, 388, 398, 401.

57 Cf. *ME*, 399, 406-407, and 411-412.

58 Cf. *ME*, 421.

4. Conclusions

We have seen that Sidgwick is able to generate answers to hard cases in a comparatively simple way. We have found it natural to make a number of demands on a moral theory. It is demand, explicit in Sidgwick, that we identify, systematise and formalise put of our moral thinking certain 'methods' or procedures for coming to ethical conclusions. This demand goes with a general attitude that ethics, as it stands, is a mess, and needs to be sanitised by scientific methods.

Henry Sidgwick seems to have successfully reconciled intuitional or common sense morality – the nineteenth-century opponent to utilitarianism – with utilitarian principles, or at least has been credited with so doing. He argued that the only ultimate good to be sought rationally by human beings consists in happiness, that is, in the happiness states of individual persons. Each one of us however confronts the requirements imposed by two final ends: universal happiness to which utilitarianism enjoins us to understand our duties and obligations, and egoistic happiness whose imperatives none of us are able wholly to set aside.

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