

## ***Sidgwick's Philosophical Intuitions***

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### **ABSTRACT**

Sidgwick famously claimed that an argument in favour of utilitarianism might be provided by demonstrating that a set of defensible philosophical intuitions undergird it. This paper focuses on those philosophical intuitions. It aims to show which specific intuitions Sidgwick endorsed, and to shed light on their mutual connections. It argues against many rival interpretations that Sidgwick maintained that six philosophical intuitions constitute the self-evident grounds for utilitarianism, and that those intuitions appear to be specifications of a negative principle of universalization (according to which differential treatments must be based on reasonable grounds alone). In addition, this paper attempts to show how the intuitions function in the overall argument for utilitarianism. The suggestion is that the intuitions are the main positive part of the argument for the view, which includes Sidgwick's rejection of common-sense morality and its philosophical counterpart, dogmatic intuitionism. The paper concludes by arguing that some of Sidgwick's intuitions fail to meet the conditions for self-evidence which Sidgwick himself established and applied to the rules of common-sense morality.

0. One aim of Henry Sidgwick's *The Methods of Ethics* is to provide an argument for utilitarianism, the view that an agent acts rightly insofar as she performs that action, out of the range of actions open to her, which maximizes aggregate happiness, hedonistically construed. He takes intuitions to be central to this aim. He maintains that 'the utilitarian method...could not...be made coherent and harmonious without...[a] fundamental intuition' (ME xvi-xvii), that 'the only moral intuitions which sound philosophy can accept as ultimately valid are those which at the same time provide the only possible philosophical basis of the Utilitarian creed' (PC 564), and that 'the Intuitional method rigorously applied yields as its final result the doctrine of pure Universalistic Hedonism, – which it is convenient to denote by the single word, Utilitarianism' (ME 406-407).<sup>1</sup> The

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<sup>1</sup> For the abbreviations used herein, see the bibliography of primary sources below.

nature and number of intuitions and the role that they play in Sidgwick's argument is obscure. My purpose here is to clarify his position. In §§ 1 & 2, I defend an account of the nature and number of intuitions on which he relies. In § 3, I attempt to make sense of how the intuitions function in the argument for utilitarianism. In § 4, I briefly outline some worries about the intuitions.

1. Sidgwick subscribes to philosophical intuitionism, the view that there are 'one or more principles more absolutely and undeniably true and evident' (ME 102). These principles are self-evident: a proper understanding of them is sufficient for justifiably believing them (ME 229). The justification of these principles is therefore direct or arrived at by 'direct reflection' on the nature of the propositions in question (ME 383), though no intuition is infallible (ME 211; cf. ME 400). He calls this position intuitional in the 'wider sense' because with other intuitional positions it shares a commitment to 'self-evident principles relating to "what ought to be"' (ME 102n1). Intuitionism in the 'narrower sense' is dogmatic intuitionism. It is committed to the existence of self-evident propositions which are general rules 'implicit in the moral reasoning of ordinary men, who apprehend them adequately for most practical purposes' (ME 101). More specifically, it claims that 'we have the power of seeing clearly that certain kinds of actions are right and reasonable in themselves, apart from their consequences; – or rather with a merely partial consideration of consequences, from which other consequences admitted to be possibly good or bad are definitely excluded' (ME 200). The kinds of actions that are right are those required by the rules of justice, benevolence, and veracity, among others. A third species of intuitionism, perceptual intuitionism, holds that we intuit the morality of particular actions without reliance on rules or principles (ME 100).

Sidgwick rejects both dogmatic and perceptual intuitionism en route to his defense of philosophical intuitionism and utilitarianism. He does not devote much space to perceptual intuitionism but it is clear that he rejects it (ME 100-101, 214). The argument contra dogmatic intuitionism is more sustained and more central to his endorsement of philosophical intuitionism (ME 337-361). After an exhaustive survey of the various rules of common-sense morality with which the dogmatic intuitionist is concerned, he argues that we must reject the normative aspect of the view on the grounds that none of the rules, 'when fairly contemplated, even appears to have the characteristic of a scientific axiom' (ME 360). The problem is that the rules of common-sense morality are

unclear, or if clear, then disputed, or in conflict with each other, and therefore do not satisfy the four conditions of self-evidence, which require that for a proposition to be self-evident it must be 'clear and precise', 'ascertained by careful reflection', consistent with other propositions considered self-evident, and disagreement regarding its truth be absent or explained away (ME 338-342). At most, the rules of common-sense morality provide adequate guidance to typical people in typical circumstances. In the wake of his rejection of dogmatic intuition Sidgwick finds 'certain absolute practical principles, the truth of which, when they are explicitly stated, is manifest; but they are of too abstract a nature, and too universal in their scope, to enable us to ascertain by immediate application of them what we ought to do in any particular case; particular duties have still to be determined by some other method' (ME 379). These philosophical intuitions provide 'a rational basis for the Utilitarian system', the method by which we determine our particular duties (ME 387; see also ME 406-407).

Sidgwick relies on the following six philosophical intuitions.

1. 'It cannot be right for *A* to treat *B* in a manner in which it would be wrong for *B* to treat *A*, merely on the ground that they are two different individuals, and without there being any difference between the natures or circumstances of the two which can be stated as a reasonable ground for difference of treatment' (ME 380). Call this intuition U.
2. 'The mere difference of priority and posteriority in time is not a reasonable ground for having more regard to the consciousness of one moment that [*sic*] to that of another' (ME 381). Call this intuition T.
3. 'The good of any one individual is of no more importance, from the point of view (if I may say so) of the Universe, than the good of any other; unless, that is, there are special grounds for believing that more good is likely to be realized in the one case than in the other' (ME 382). Call this intuition P.
4. 'As a rational being I am bound to aim at good generally, – so far as it is attainable by my efforts, – not merely at a particular part of it' (ME 382). Call this intuition B.

5. ‘Happiness (when explained to mean a sum of pleasures)... [is] the sole ultimate end’ (ME 402; see also LE 107, 128-130). Call this intuition H.

6. ‘The greater *quantum* of pleasure is to be preferred to the less, and that *ex vi termini* the larger sum made up of less intense pleasures is the greater quantum of pleasure’ (LE 110; italics in original). Call this intuition M.

I will now attempt to justify the contention that Sidgwick relies on six philosophical intuitions. He thinks U is self-evident: immediately preceding it he says that ‘the self-evident principle strictly stated must take some such negative form as this’ (ME 380). This proposition requires unpacking. It entails that one be consistent in one’s moral judgements. If one claims that a certain act x is wrong, then one is rationally bound to claim that act y is wrong if x and y are identical in all their universal properties, i.e., features that may be stated as reasonable grounds for differentiating moral treatment or assessment. But what constitutes a ‘reasonable ground’ for variation in evaluative assessment? In discussing the intuition only unreasonable grounds appear to be discussed. This is not surprising: the axiom is ‘negative’, intending to ‘throw a definite *onus probandi* on the man who applies to another a treatment of which he would complain if applied to himself’ (ME 380). One ground that is explicitly ruled out as unreasonable is one that appeals to properties explicated purely in terms of particulars, i.e., non-generic terms.<sup>2</sup> The intuition, it seems, is intended to rule out as reasonable grounds such items as numerical differences, proper names and indexical terms, spatial location, essential reference to individuals, and so on. The intuition requires consistency in one’s moral judgements with variations based on reasonable grounds alone, where reasonable grounds exclude non-generic terms.<sup>3</sup>

In his initial discussion of T Sidgwick does not say that the principle is self-evident. Instead, he implies it by stating that T is another ‘principle’ epistemologically analogous to U (ME 380-381). But only two pages later he

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<sup>2</sup> For an excellent discussion of this issue, see Michael Smith, “Does the Evaluative Supervene on the Natural?,” *Well-being and Morality: Essays in Honour of James Griffin*, eds., Roger Crisp and Brad Hooker (Oxford: University Press, 2000), 91-114, esp. 97-101, & J. L. Mackie, *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong* (London: Penguin, 1977), 83-102.

<sup>3</sup> This intuition does not fill this notion out completely, however. This may leave Sidgwick open to the charge that this intuition is not clear and precise, though see below for more on this.

confirms that he holds that T is self-evident (ME 383). T and the other intuitions attempt to build on U. Each specifies further both ‘unreasonable’ and ‘reasonable’ grounds for varying one’s moral judgements. In an early paper Sidgwick confirms this. ‘The essence of Justice or Equity, in so far as it is absolutely obligatory, is that different individuals are not to be treated differently, except on grounds of universal application: which grounds, again, are given in the principle of Rational Benevolence’ (UG 31). T expresses the idea that location in time is not directly or intrinsically relevant to the value of a state of affairs or experience.<sup>4</sup> T requires that agents remain rationally indifferent to when benefits and burdens occur. Sidgwick provides what look like several different versions of T, e.g., that ‘I ought not to prefer a present lesser good to a future greater good’ (ME 383) and that ‘a smaller present good is not to be preferred to a greater future good’ (ME 381), though these remain consistent with T.

P is described as a ‘self-evident principle’ (ME 382) and B is characterized as ‘evident’ and as a ‘rational’ intuition (ME 382) and as self-evident (ME 383). P and B give expression to some of the central features of utilitarianism. The general upshot of accepting them is that to whom a benefit or burden accrues is not directly significant to the morality or rationality of action. P is designed to nudge us towards this position by abstracting from one’s own identity and adopting the point of view of no one in particular. From this viewpoint – the ‘point of view...of the universe’, as he calls it – we notice that each person has a good but that no one person’s good is of more importance than another person’s good. In taking up this point of view Sidgwick finds it self-evident that no one person’s good satisfies what we might call a ‘uniqueness condition’, a condition the satisfaction of which would make it special and therefore more intrinsically important than another person’s good. The exclusive role of P in the establishment of utilitarianism is that it opens up the possibility for a radically impartial theory of rational action, though it is important to point out that P presupposes that it is possible to compare the goods of individuals as against each other. Sidgwick explicitly states that the only legitimate ground for giving one person’s good more attention is if that good happens to be greater than

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<sup>4</sup> A factor, that is, independent of the quantity of goodness under consideration. For example, if x and y are of equal goodness in terms of their quantity, then other things being equal we ought rationally to have equal regard for them, despite the fact that the occurrence of x takes place at time t while y takes place at time t+ 1 year.

others in the class of all those being compared, and this implies comparability of the good and hence the possibility of aggregating goods both interpersonally and intrapersonally.

What is not implied by P is anything about how rational beings are required to act. From the fact that when viewed from the point of view of the universe it is possible to compare goods across individuals and to discover that no one's good is any more important than another's, it does not follow that we should be impartial as regards individual goods or that we should promote the good impartially construed. It is possible to grant that my good is of no more importance than another's, but hold that rationally speaking we have only to promote our own good on the whole. Similarly, it is possible to grant the claim about the possibility of comparability, of commensurability and of aggregation, but hold that rationally speaking we have only to promote our own good on the whole. This is, I think, something Sidgwick would accept, since for him the real debate between the egoist and the utilitarian turns on whether reasons are agent-relative rather than agent-neutral or vice versa (ME 420). This is what makes B key to the debate between rational egoism and utilitarianism, and it is clear that he regards it as such (ME 387-388, 500).<sup>5</sup> B represents the agent-neutrality that is at the very heart of utilitarian moral theories. It claims that the fact that something is good gives anyone and hence everyone a reason to desire or promote it. The mere fact that an act (or whatever) advances the good gives anyone a reason to do it.

Sidgwick thinks that a maxim of benevolence follows from P and B. As he puts it: 'from these two rational intuitions we may deduce, as a necessary inference, the maxim of Benevolence in an abstract form: viz. that each one is morally bound to regard the good of any other individual as much as his own, except in so far as he judges it to be less, when impartially viewed, or less certainly knowable or attainable by him' (ME 382). The precise manner in which this proposition follows from P and B is unclear. The claim that one ought to regard the good of another as much as one's own is misleading, for what happens when one does not have any regard for one's own good? It is better to construe the inference as stating that one is bound to maximize the good no matter whose it happens to be, since his view is that we do find something of value from the point of view of the universe. This makes it

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<sup>5</sup>Rational egoism is the view that an agent is rational insofar as he seeks to maximize his own happiness, hedonistically construed (ME 95, 121).

consistent with B, which enjoins promotion of the general good rather than enjoining parity in treatment between oneself and others. The inference from P and B could be stated as follows: as a rational being I am bound to aim at good generally unless there is some sort of non-arbitrary reason not to do so. That is, I am bound to aim at good generally unless someone's or a group's good satisfies something like the uniqueness condition. From the point of view of the universe it appears self-evident that no one person's good is of any more importance than another person's, other things being equal. Therefore, from a denial of the fact that anything satisfies a uniqueness condition together with the claim that I have reason to aim at the good generally, it follows that I am morally bound to aim at the good, agent-neutrally construed.

Why does Sidgwick call this a necessary inference? The only real change between B and it is (at least in the way I have construed it) in the use of the phrase 'as a rational being I am bound' in B and the use of the phrase 'each one is morally bound' in the necessary deduction. This is a necessary inference because for him "rationally bound" is synonymous with "morally bound" (ME 375, 34-35). Shortly after completing his account of U, T, P, B and the deduction, Sidgwick maintains that he has arrived, 'in my search for really clear and certain ethical intuitions, at the fundamental principle of Utilitarianism' (ME 387). But as he notes this is not quite accurate, since 'to make this transition logically complete, we require to interpret "Universal Good" as "Universal Happiness"' (ME 388).

It is not obvious that H is self-evident. At best U, T, P, and B together establish some sort of maximizing consequentialism.<sup>6</sup> However, Sidgwick's remarks indicate that he wants to establish utilitarianism using the intuitional method, not just maximizing consequentialism (ME xvi-xx, 387, 388, 406-407, UG 31-33, PC 564). If we are to take this claim seriously, we need to consider whether or not he actually thinks there is an intuition pertaining to the ultimate good. Without such an intuition it seems that we cannot make sense of his claim to have established utilitarianism by the intuitive method.

In defending his claim that happiness is the only thing good in itself, Sidgwick asks that 'the reader...use the same twofold procedure that I before requested him to employ in considering the absolute and independent validity of common moral precepts' (ME 400). The twofold process involves both an appeal

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<sup>6</sup> J. B. Schneewind, *Sidgwick's Ethics and Victorian Moral Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 304.

to ‘intuitive judgement [of the reflective intellect] after due consideration of the question when placed fairly before it’ and ‘a comprehensive comparison of the ordinary judgements of mankind’ (ME 400; see also LE 127).<sup>7</sup> As regards the first procedure Sidgwick states that upon ‘sober’ reflection in, as Butler says, ‘a cool hour’, he arrives at the following intuition: ‘we can only justify to ourselves the importance that we attach to any of these objects [‘Virtue, Truth, Beauty, Freedom’ (ME 400)] by considering its conduciveness, in one way or another, to the happiness of sentient beings’ (ME 401). Elsewhere Sidgwick is more explicit: ‘My own answer to the question...Why is the ultimate good and criterion held to be pleasure? is, that nothing but pleasure appears to the reflective mind to be good in itself, without reference to an ulterior end; and in particular, reflection on the notion of the most esteemed qualities of character and conduct shows that they contain an implicit reference to some other and further good’ (LE 107). Furthermore, he says that he appeals to intuition to ‘justify my own view that it is Pleasure alone, desirable Feeling, that is ultimately and intrinsically good’ (LE 126). The intuition appears to be that happiness which consists in pleasure defined as ‘a feeling which, when experienced by intelligent beings, is at least implicitly apprehended as desirable or – in cases of comparison – preferable’ (ME 127; see also ME 131, LE 130) is the sole ultimate good.<sup>8</sup> That he thinks he has obtained an intuition with respect to the ultimate good explains (a) why he thinks that the intuitional method when rigorously applied

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<sup>7</sup>He is not here trying to justify his account of ultimate good by reference to common sense itself. He says that his aim is to ‘bring Common Sense to this admission [namely]...that Happiness is the only thing ultimately and intrinsically Good or Desirable’ (ME 421n1; italics added). This may not always have been the case. In an early discussion he argues that to establish his view of ultimate good he appeals to ‘the immediate intuition of reflective persons; and...to the results of a comprehensive comparison of the ordinary judgements of mankind’ (UG 35). Here he contends that the argument from ordinary judgements ‘comes in rather by way of confirmation of the first’ (UG 35), suggesting that he thinks the ordinary-judgements argument confirms the intuitive one. In the final edition of ME, however, he drops the claim about confirmation, which suggests that he changed his mind on this point (see also LE 128). Whatever the case may be, in both cases it looks like he is employing the intuitional method (at least in part) to arrive at an account of ultimate good. For an account of Sidgwick’s attitude toward the epistemological status of common-sense morality, see Anthony Skelton, “Schultz’s Sidgwick,” *Utilitas* 19 (2007), 91-103.

<sup>8</sup> It is not obvious what Sidgwick means by pleasure. The passage quoted in the text is just one of the accounts of pleasure he provides. For others, see ME 94; 93 & 120-121; & 402. He appears to favour the account quoted in the text; see LE 130, ME 398.

leads to utilitarianism and (b) his frequent appeals to intuitive reflection in his discussion of the nature of the ultimate good.

Of course Sidgwick nowhere declares explicitly that H it is self-evident. He argues only that he relies on the intuitional method to arrive at H. But his only account of what the intuitional method comprises suggests that he holds that H is self-evident. Recall his account of an intuition: ‘by calling any affirmation as to the rightness or wrongness of actions “intuitive,” I do not mean to prejudge the question as to its ultimate validity, when philosophically considered: I only mean that its truth is apparently known immediately, and not as the result of reasoning’ (ME 211; see also PC 564). If this is a basic feature of the intuitional method, then we may conclude that Sidgwick arrives at his account of the ultimate good in the same way that he arrives at his other intuitions, by direct reflection on the proposition in question. My suggestion is confirmed by his only other explicit discussion of the relationship between hedonism and intuitionism (ME 98). He claims that hedonism is authoritative just in case happiness, hedonistically construed, is the ultimate reason for action. This claim is not known by induction from experience in the way Mill might have thought. Rather, if the claim that pleasure is the only reasonable ultimate end of human action ‘is legitimately affirmed in respect either of private or of general happiness, it must either be immediately known to be true, – and therefore, we may say, a moral intuition – or be inferred ultimately from premises which include at least one such moral intuition; hence either species of Hedonism, regarded from the point of view primarily taken in this treatise, might be legitimately said to be in a certain sense “intuitional”’ (ME 98).<sup>9</sup> Since he does not infer his own account of ultimate value from premises it must be the case that he thinks it is known by intuition, hence he thinks it is self-evident that the good is happiness, hedonistically construed, for a moral proposition is a moral intuition only if it is self-evident.

Sidgwick thinks he arrives at a maximizing version of utilitarianism (ME 411). It is not made explicit how he gets maximization out of his intuitions. His thought might be that doing less than the maximum would result in aiming at only part of the good. By doing less than the maximum one would be aiming merely at a particular part of the good rather than at good generally. However, it looks like Sidgwick gets maximization in another way. He does not claim explicitly that we ought to maximize the good. Instead, he seems to think that

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<sup>9</sup> He is referring here to the wider sense of intuitional; see ME 98n2.

if ‘it be granted that pleasure as the end is made up of elements capable of quantitative comparison’, then it is ‘self-evident’ that M (LE 110). Together B, H and M require that we aim at maximal happiness or pleasure agent-neutrally construed.

2. I have argued that Sidgwick relies on six philosophical intuitions in his argument for utilitarianism. In this section I argue against rival interpretations.

In *The Theory of Good and Evil*, Hastings Rashdall suggests that Sidgwick relies on three philosophical intuitions.<sup>10</sup> He maintains that Sidgwick holds it self-evident that ‘I ought to promote my own good on the whole (where no one else’s good is affected), that I ought to regard a larger good for society in general as of more intrinsic value than a smaller good, and that one man’s good is (other things being equal) of as much intrinsic value as any other man’s.’<sup>11</sup> He calls these prudence, rational benevolence and equity. He misses U, T, M and H. He might be forgiven for missing H, but not for missing the others, which are clearly labeled self-evident.<sup>12</sup> Sidgwick does not in ME state that Rashdall’s ‘prudence’ is self-evident. At best such a requirement falls out of the requirement to advance the aggregate good in a case where one finds oneself marooned on an uninhabited desert island. Rashdall must be confusing ‘prudence’ with T.<sup>13</sup> His rational benevolence and equity resemble B and P and the necessary inference discussed above. Nevertheless, he misses the key element of B, namely, that we ought to aim at good generally rather than at merely a particular part of the good: he gives the intuition an axiological, rather than

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<sup>10</sup> Hastings Rashdall, *The Theory of Good and Evil*, Vol. I (Oxford: University Press, 1907), 90-91, 147, & 184-185.

<sup>11</sup> Rashdall, 90-91.

<sup>12</sup> Rashdall is aware that a claim like H relies on intuition for justification. He believes that Sidgwick relies on intuition to justify something like H, though he does not seem to think that Sidgwick thinks that H is self-evident and therefore on the same level as the three other self-evident intuitions that Rashdall lists. See *Ethics* (London: T. C. & E. C. Jack, 1913), 22, and see also *Is Conscience an Emotion?* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1914), 43.

<sup>13</sup> Or, he may be misled by Sidgwick’s sometimes sloppy account of his intuitions; see ME 391-392, FC 483.

deontic gloss.<sup>14</sup> The deduction is not itself self-evident; it is deduced from self-evident propositions.

J. B. Schneewind agrees that Sidgwick endorses U, T, P and B.<sup>15</sup> He misses M. He argues that Sidgwick gets maximization from 'the definitions of rightness and goodness.'<sup>16</sup> This is untrue. First, Sidgwick claims that 'right' is not definable (ME 32, 32-33, FC 480). Second, he holds that 'good' is definable, but in his definition he does not mention the idea of maximization (ME 112). Third, he is keen to ensure that definitions of key moral terms (e.g., right and ought) remain neutral with respect to substantive moral questions (FC 480-483, ME 109). Therefore, he is unlikely to be warm to the idea of getting maximization from definitions of central moral and axiological notions.

Schneewind's point might be understood in another way. When he refers to 'definitions' he might be referring to the way in which B connects the right and the good.<sup>17</sup> He claims that what demonstrates that maximal goodness is what makes acts right is 'the negative result of the examination of common-sense morality, that none of the purely factual properties of acts can serve as an ultimate right-making characteristic. It cannot, therefore, be the case that some factual properties of acts make them right...it must rather be the case that bringing about the most good is what makes right acts right.'<sup>18</sup> This is difficult to swallow. One might grant the results of the negative argument against common-sense morality and that the good is the ultimate-right making characteristic as per Schneewind's account of the intuitions, but deny that it is maximal goodness that is the ultimate right-making characteristic. It is still the case that from B one needs an argument or something analogous to get one to the claim that we ought to maximize the good, rather than simply promote it to some degree. Indeed, Sidgwick seems required to run an argument analogous to

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<sup>14</sup> Rashdall discusses Sidgwick's intuitions again in *Ethics*, where he gives rational benevolence a deontological gloss; see *Ethics*, 62. In the same place, however, he construes prudence as the claim that 'I ought to promote my own greater good rather than my own lesser good' and rational benevolence as the claim that 'I ought to promote the greatest good on the whole' (62). As noted, Sidgwick does not defend prudence in ME, and these two intuitions sometimes conflict.

<sup>15</sup> Schneewind, 296. For a similar account of Sidgwick's intuitions, see Robert Shaver, *Rational Egoism* (Cambridge: University Press, 1999), 61-62, 74.

<sup>16</sup> Schneewind, 307.

<sup>17</sup> I owe this suggestion to Robert Shaver.

<sup>18</sup> Schneewind, 308.

the one he runs against common-sense moral rules against rivals of the maximizing conception of rationality.

On the face of it, Schneewind does not think that Sidgwick endorses an intuition pertaining to the ultimate good. Officially, his position appears to be that Sidgwick embraces *only* U, T, P and B.<sup>19</sup> This is not satisfactory. This would leave the view of the ultimate good undefended in ME, and it is not consistent with his defense of his account of ultimate good elsewhere (e.g., LE 107, 126ff.). Sidgwick also maintains that the justification of a claim like H is either inferential (i.e., inferred from a set of propositions which include at least one intuition) or intuitive (ME 98). It appears not to be inferred from any set of propositions which include at least one intuition; therefore, it must be justified by reference to intuition.

Schneewind appears to suggest that he believes this. He claims that although in Book III, chapter XIV of ME Sidgwick maintains that there is no self-evident principle ‘enabling us to connect ultimate good out of all relation to consciousness with human action’<sup>20</sup> and he is ‘not appealing to an additional intuition to exclude the intrinsic goodness of things or states of affairs out of relation to all consciousness, but is asserting only that he finds no self-evident practical principle asserting their goodness’, he does defend the ‘utilitarian principle’.<sup>21</sup> By this he means that Sidgwick has ‘not just one axiom – that pleasure is intrinsically good – but as many self-evident propositions as there are experiences of pleasure.’<sup>22</sup> In his case, Schneewind’s position is that there are the four intuitions that he explicitly notes, plus an intuition pertaining to the good, namely, that pleasure is intrinsically good, plus as many as there are experiences of pleasure.<sup>23</sup> This is problematic. First, this conflicts with Schneewind’s interpretive requirement that ‘it seems sensible to try to find the smallest number of axioms with which the work to be done by first principles can be done.’<sup>24</sup> Second, when Sidgwick discusses the intuitive argument for his account of the ultimate good he refers to pleasure as he defines it as being the only thing

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<sup>19</sup> Schneewind, 290.

<sup>20</sup> Schneewind, 325.

<sup>21</sup> Schneewind, 326.

<sup>22</sup> Schneewind, 320.

<sup>23</sup> Schneewind provides no argument for the general claim about the value of pleasure, which leads me to believe that he does not think that there is such an intuition. His focus is entirely on showing that claims about the value of particular pleasures are self-evident.

<sup>24</sup> Schneewind, 290.

that is ultimately good or to the claim that all and only the happiness, hedonistically construed, of sentient beings possesses ultimate goodness (e.g., LE 107, 126ff., ME 402, 398). He does not say that certain particular feelings are themselves self-evidently desirable. He seems to think that the general claims about pleasure or happiness are self-evident.<sup>25</sup> Schneewind is misled here by Sidgwick's view of pleasure. The latter defines pleasure as 'a feeling which, when experienced by intelligent beings, is at least implicitly apprehended as desirable or – in cases of comparison – preferable' (ME 127). It seems that Schneewind believes that the variety of apprehension mentioned here is intuitive in nature. The position is that each feeling of the sort that Sidgwick picks out is intuitively known by the one experiencing it to be desirable or intrinsically valuable. He appears at times to use apprehension in this way (ME 383). However, it is not obvious from anything he says that he intends to use it in this way in his definition of pleasure. The fact that one's apprehension of the desirability of certain feelings is not likely to be arrived on the basis of understanding alone and the fact that Sidgwick believes that non-human animals can experience pleasure indicates that he does not intend to use the term this way.<sup>26</sup>

J.M.E. McTaggart argues that Sidgwick produces five intuitions.<sup>27</sup> Unlike other commentators, McTaggart is aware that Sidgwick has an intuition resembling H, though he provides no argument for this.<sup>28</sup> My argument above vindicates his assertion. However, he holds that there is another axiological intuition, that 'nothing...is good as an end except some state of a conscious being; and nothing is good as a means except as tending to bring about some state of a conscious being.'<sup>29</sup> There is some evidence that this is Sidgwick's view. At the conclusion of his discussion of the notion 'good' he says that 'we can find nothing that, on

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<sup>25</sup> Robert Shaver has suggested to me that the claim about particular pleasures may simply be an application of the general claim that pleasure is intrinsically valuable. In this case, however, it would be mistaken to think that claims about particular pleasures are axioms rather than derivations from an axiom and this cannot be Schneewind's view because he contends that the particular episodes of pleasure meet the tests that Sidgwick applies to self-evident intuitions (Schneewind, 319).

<sup>26</sup> For the claim about animals, see ME 414.

<sup>27</sup> J. Ellis McTaggart, "The Ethics of Henry Sidgwick," *Quarterly Review* 205 (1906), 398-419.

<sup>28</sup> For the same, see William Frankena, "Sidgwick, Henry," *An Encyclopedia of Morals*, ed., Vergilius Ferm (New York: Philosophical Library, 1956), 539-544, 542.

<sup>29</sup> McTaggart, 407.

reflection, appears to possess this quality of goodness out of relation to human existence, or at least to some consciousness or feeling' (ME 113; see also LE 124). Sidgwick often uses the language of reflection in his discussion of the intuitions above (see, e.g., ME 383). This seems to indicate that we should interpret him as holding this intuition. But in the case of the above intuitions in general and in the case of H in particular he says that he relies on intuition or that they are self-evident; he does not say this with respect to the claim that McTaggart refers to. He seems instead to treat this claim as a lemma in his argument for the proposition that happiness (hedonistically construed) is the sole ultimate good (ME 398). Moreover, since he raises objections to it, it is best to see him as holding that it does not qualify as an intuition.

McTaggart also maintains that Sidgwick thinks that it is self-evident that 'we ought to prefer the good to the bad.'<sup>30</sup> He lists no evidence that Sidgwick thinks this, and it seems more likely that Sidgwick thinks that it is part of the definition of good that we ought to seek it, and that it is part of the definition of bad that we ought not to seek it. Indeed, he defines 'ultimate good on the whole' as 'what as a rational being I should desire and seek to realize, assuming myself to have an equal concern for *all* existence' (ME 112; italics in original). McTaggart misses some of the other intuitions (e.g., P and M). Most surprising is the fact that he misses U. Sidgwick holds that U is self-evident. Immediately preceding U the following words appear: 'the self-evident principle strictly stated must take some such negative form as this' (ME 380). It may be that McTaggart is misled by the fact that Sidgwick is not entirely explicit about the status of this requirement. He sometimes treats U as a logical requirement built into the meaning of moral terms, and perhaps McTaggart's belief is that this is Sidgwick's considered view.

In one of his main discussions of meta-ethics Sidgwick claims that terms like 'ought' and 'right' and their cognates are 'too elementary to admit of any formal definition' (ME 32; see also FC 480-483). The only method by which to clarify the fundamental notion is 'by determining as precisely as possible its relation to other notions with which it is connected in ordinary thought' (ME 33). One 'notion' with which these terms are connected (and with which they are liable to be 'confounded') is the following. 'When a moral judgement relates primarily to some particular action we commonly regard it as applicable to any other action belonging to a certain definable class: so that the moral truth

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<sup>30</sup> McTaggart, 408.

apprehended is implicitly conceived to be intrinsically universal, though particular in our first apprehension of it' (ME 34).<sup>31</sup> Although he maintains that this notion is intimately connected with 'ought' judgements he does not claim that the notion or requirement is built into the meaning of the term and its cognates. Indeed, he argues that these latter terms are not definable. This suggests that he is not a proponent of the logical thesis that universality is part of the meaning of moral judgements. This is further confirmed by his suggestion, when discussing the principle elsewhere, that the requirement of universality is 'implied in the common notion of "fairness" or "equity"' (ME 380), a substantive normative principle.<sup>32</sup> In addition, he treats this principle in the same way that he treats the other self-evident intuitions, namely, as requirements of rationality (ME 386-387).

There is some evidence, however, that he holds that it is a logical requirement contained in the meaning of moral notions. In his discussion of dogmatic intuitionism he claims that the following is obtained by merely 'reflecting on the general notion of rightness' (ME 208). 'We cannot judge an action to be right for *A* and wrong for *B*, unless we can find in the natures or circumstances of the two some difference which we can regard as a reasonable ground for difference in their duties' (ME 209). His remark that he finds this principle by reflecting on the notion of rightness suggests that he believes the requirement to be one of logic. But this is a little too quick. In the discussion mentioned in the last paragraph he says that the requirement of universality is 'connected in ordinary thought' with terms like 'right' and 'ought' despite not being part of the definition of these terms. In his later discussion he refers to the notion of rightness as 'commonly conceived'. This suggests that, although the requirement is found in the notion of rightness 'as commonly conceived', it is not strictly speaking part of the meaning of the term 'right' or 'ought'. This is, I think, the best way to reconcile his later comments with those discussed above. Finally, Sidgwick explicitly states that he wants to arrive at 'self-evident moral principles of real significance' (ME 379), not merely tautologies or 'sham-axioms' (ME 374). This gives us a strong reason to think that he does not intend the principle as a logical thesis, but as a self-evident principle.

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<sup>31</sup> This resembles his final articulation of U; he explicitly connects the two at ME 208n2.

<sup>32</sup> By 'implied in' he does not mean built into the meanings of the term; see ME 386.

A.R. Lacey argues that Sidgwick espouses seven intuitions.<sup>33</sup> His account of the intuitions is close to mine, though he, too, misses M and H. He mistakenly lists the necessary inference as an intuition.<sup>34</sup> He lists U, but he thinks that there are further intuitions with respect to justice in ME. According to Lacey, Sidgwick holds that the following two claims are self-evident. ‘If a kind of conduct that is right (or wrong) for me is not right (or wrong) for some one else, it must be on the ground of some difference between the two cases, other than the fact that I and he are different persons’ and that we ought to exhibit ‘Impartiality in the application of general rules’.<sup>35</sup> Sidgwick discusses both of these requirements. As regards the first, he says that it is ‘widely recognized’, but after raising objections to it and some other similar accounts he says that the self-evident principle ‘strictly stated’ is U. The others are either imprecise or applications and he accepts U in part because it is precise (ME 380). Of the second requirement, Sidgwick does say that there ‘appeared to be no other element which could be intuitively known with perfect clearness and certainty’ (ME 380). The key word here is ‘appeared’. It may be the case that it appeared to be that there was no other element which could be known intuitively, but Sidgwick’s view seems to be that the appearance is illusory, since he claims that there are no self-evident propositions to be found in common-sense morality (ME 360). At best, the requirement is another formulation of U.

Some further matters need to be dealt with. T is often regarded as the basis for rational egoism.<sup>36</sup> However, as T stands here it is consistent with both rational egoism and utilitarianism.<sup>37</sup> The intuition does not tell one whether or

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<sup>33</sup>A. R. Lacey, “Sidgwick’s Ethical Maxims,” *Philosophy* 34 (1959), 217-228. For a similar account of Sidgwick’s intuitions with some of the same errors, see C. D. Broad, *Five Types of Ethical Theory* (London: Kegan Paul, 1930), 223-227.

<sup>34</sup>Lacey, 219. It may be that Rashdall, McTaggart, Lacey and others are misled on this score by previous editions of ME, where Sidgwick lists the ‘necessary inference’ found in ME as an intuition (see ME2 355, ME3 381-382, ME4 382). This mistake is also found in F. H. Hayward, *The Ethical Philosophy of Sidgwick* (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1901), 110. Hayward notes that Sidgwick endorses T and U.

<sup>35</sup>Lacey, 218.

<sup>36</sup>Schneewind, 362, and Bernard Williams, “The Point of View of the Universe: Sidgwick and the Ambitions of Ethics,” *Making Sense of Humanity* (Cambridge: University Press, 1995), 153-171, 160-161.

<sup>37</sup>For this point, see Georg von Gizycki’s review of ME4, *International Journal of Ethics* 1 (1890), 120-121. See also Shaver, 75, Schneewind, 361, and Hastings Rashdall, “Professor Sidgwick’s Utilitarianism,” *Mind* 10 (1885), 200-226, esp. 202, and ME 414.

not one should give greater regard to one's own good on the whole than the good on the whole of others.<sup>38</sup>

But Sidgwick is not always careful. He claims at one point that prudence, 'so far as...[it is] self-evident, may be stated as...[a precept] to seek...one's own good on the whole, repressing all seductive impulses prompting to undue preference of particular goods' (ME 391-392). There are three reasons for thinking that his considered view is that only T is self-evident. First, he could not have intended to argue for something that would lead to egoism in his discussion of T, for this directly contradicts his claim that the intuitions he discusses in ME (U, T, P, B and H) provide a 'rational basis' for utilitarianism, not both utilitarianism and egoism (ME 387). If the intuition is supposed to refer not only to T but also to the essential features of rational egoism, these claims about establishing utilitarianism are baffling at best. Second, by his own account, he did not attempt to establish the truth of egoism in the first three editions of ME (FC 484). However, starting in the second and third editions T and some other intuitions that pertain to utilitarianism *are* present (ME2 354, ME3 380-381). If the intuition did prove rational egoism, he could not say that he provided no argument for it in the second and third editions. Sidgwick does say in ME3 and ME4 that T is the 'principle on which...Rational Egoism is based' (ME3 388, ME4 386-387). But he noticed that this conflicted with his claim not to be providing a basis for the view. Hence, in subsequent editions he stated very clearly that T is merely 'implied in' rational egoism (ME 386). It is not there providing a 'rational basis' for egoism in the way that B provides (or appears to provide) a rational basis for utilitarianism (ME 387).<sup>39</sup> Third, when he does turn to a discussion of what the basis of rational egoism might be, he does not refer to T. Instead, he contends that the 'rationality of Egoism is based [on]...the assumption...that the distinction between any one individual and any other is real and fundamental, and that consequently "I" am concerned with the quality of my existence as an individual in a sense, fundamentally important, in which I am not concerned with the quality of the existence of other individuals' (FC 484; see also ME 498). He declares that this proposition is the 'self-evident' intuition 'upon which the rationality of Egoism is based' (FC 484).

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<sup>38</sup> Indeed, even the practical manifestation of the principle is agnostic as to whether individual or aggregate good is to be promoted.

<sup>39</sup> For this point, see Shaver, 76.

It is important to note here that Sidgwick may be construed as producing a seventh intuition in his discussion of the basis of rational egoism. I dissent from this construal. First, Sidgwick does not declare that the above proposition is self-evident in ME (ME 498). Second, there is good reason for this and hence good reason for thinking that this is not a seventh intuition. This intuition appears to fail the clarity and distinctness test. It runs the idea of separateness of individuals together with the claim about its role in our thoughts about what we have most reason to do. Precision requires separating various ideas from each other and this putative intuition does not achieve this.<sup>40</sup> It might be that in ME Sidgwick means to connect the claim about separateness with reasons for action. This seems problematic. The passage states that the second claim follows from the first but this is not an obvious or necessary truth, for while there may be cases where this is true, there are well known counter-examples. Mother Teresa might well have noted that she is a separate individual with a set of projects and commitments that drove only her as any agent, but that she was not concerned with her own good in a way that was fundamentally more important and different than her concern for others. It is also not obvious just how fundamental the unconcern for others is that follows from the distinctness. I might be concerned with myself in a way more fundamental than the way I am concerned with you but still hold that I have at times a duty to help others, for example, where the cost to me is negligible and the benefit to you is great. I might think that for the most part I am concerned for myself but not entirely. If this proposition is to pass the test and get us to rational egoism it has to construe ‘fundamental’ in the strongest possible sense. But this is unclear from the way the proposition is stated. In light of these problems and the fact that he does not declare that this claim is self-evident in ME, it seems best to think that Sidgwick’s considered view is that there is not a seventh philosophical intuition.

3. My aim to this point has been to outline the philosophical intuitions on which Sidgwick relies in his argument for utilitarianism. But how does he demonstrate the truth of utilitarianism by reliance on the intuitions? Nowhere is any kind of deduction or argument from the intuitions as premises to utilitarianism as a conclusion provided. In this section I provide a schematic statement of how the

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<sup>40</sup> A ‘distinct notion of any object...[is] one that is not liable to be confounded with that of any different object’ (LK 449).

intuitions figure into the argument for utilitarianism. The best way to see the role that the intuitions play in his argument is to situate them in the general structure of ME. The intuitive argument for utilitarianism forms one part of the argument for the view, which includes a negative argument contra common-sense morality and its philosophical counterpart, dogmatic intuitionism, the main features of which are found in Book III, chapter XI, the appeal to philosophical intuitions, which takes place primarily in Book III, chapters XIII & XIV, and a Millian-style proof, which is supplied in Book IV, chapters II & III.<sup>41</sup>

Had Sidgwick attempted an explicit argument, it might have looked as follows:

P1. As a rational being I am bound by the basic requirements of reason.

P2. The basic, ultimate requirements of reason direct one to do either what is based on what is right without reliance on all of the consequences that flow from what one is doing or on what is good without restriction (ME 2-3, 391, UG 27-28, OHE 6-7).

P3. It is not the case that the basic requirements of reason direct one to do what is right without reliance on all of the consequences that flow from what one is doing (ME 337-361). Instead, the morality of common sense is at best 'perfectly adequate to give practical guidance to common people in common circumstances' (ME 361).<sup>42</sup>

C1. Therefore, as a rational being I am bound to regard what is good without restriction (ME 391).

P4. Variation of treatment of individuals must be based on *reasonable* grounds alone, where this is considered to exclude non-generic grounds (ME 380). (This is U.)

P5. It is not reasonable to regard the time at which the good occurs as directly (or intrinsically) relevant to its value (ME 381). (This is T.)

P6. It is not reasonable to regard to whom the good accrues as directly (or intrinsically) relevant to the rationality of an action (ME 382; see also UG 31). Instead, one is required to advance the good, agent-neutrally construed. (This is a combination of P and B.)

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<sup>41</sup> For more on the nature of the Millian proof, see Henry Sidgwick, "The Establishment of Ethical First Principles," *Mind* 4 (1879), 106-111.

<sup>42</sup>This is the conclusion of the negative argument against common-sense morality and dogmatic intuitionism.

P7. ‘Happiness (when explained to mean a sum of pleasures)...[is] the sole ultimate end’ (ME 402; see also LE 107), where pleasure is defined as ‘a feeling which, when experienced by intelligent beings, is at least implicitly apprehended as desirable or – in cases of comparison – preferable’ (ME 127; see also ME 131, LE 130). (This is H.)

P8. ‘It is self-evident that the greater *quantum* of pleasure is to be preferred to the less, and that *ex vi termini* the larger sum made up of less intense pleasures is the greater quantum of pleasure’ (LE 110; italics in original). (This is M.)

C2. Therefore, I, as a rational being, am morally bound to advance to a maximum degree happiness, agent-neutrally and temporally neutrally construed.

P9. If a method of ethics embodies or gives the best or most reasonable expression of these ultimate requirements of reason or intuitions, then it is true.

P10. Utilitarianism is the only method of ethics (that we know of) that embodies or is the best expression of these intuitions.

C3. Therefore, utilitarianism is the only method of ethics or rational procedure by which I determine what I ought to do.

C4. Therefore, as a rational being I am bound by the dictates of utilitarianism.

This seems a reasonable summary of the main argument for utilitarianism in ME, and of how the intuitions function in the argument. The intuitions provide epistemic justification for utilitarianism and emerge in the context of an argument against the claim that there are self-evident intuitions within common-sense morality, and this argument is supplemented by the Millian-style proof of Book IV, chapters I & II.

4. As I mentioned above, Sidgwick rejects the claim that the main rules of common-sense morality (e.g., justice, good faith, veracity and purity) are properly characterized as self-evident. Instead, his view is that ‘such rules...are only valid so far as their observance is conducive to the general happiness’ (ME 8). His main criticism is that the rules of common-sense morality fail his tests for self-evidence (discussed in § I) (ME 338-342). Broadly speaking, he argues that ‘so long as they are left in the state of somewhat vague generalities...we are disposed to yield them unquestioning assent...But as soon as we attempt to give them the definiteness which science requires, we find that we cannot do this without abandoning the universality of acceptance’ (ME 342). Sidgwick is very scrupulous when examining the putative intuitions of rivals; however, he is

much less than rigorous when it comes to demonstrating that his own intuitions satisfy the conditions for self-evidence. In this section, I briefly outline how some of his intuitions appear to fail the tests.

If we apply the clarity and precision and disagreement tests to Sidgwick's intuitions we do indeed find difficulties. In his discussion of U he does not define what he means by a 'reasonable' ground for difference of treatment. The notion admits of several different interpretations, and although I have tried to clarify it, it is not clear or precise from examining U alone that all rational inquirers will agree on how to understand the notion of 'reasonable' or what is implied by it. If one examines B, one finds Sidgwick arguing that we ought to aim at good generally, not merely at a particular part of it. One might agree to this claim when it is put in this way. However, disagreement might emerge because rational inquirers have different views about how we ought to aim at the good. Some rational inquirers may well agree to B but only when it is accepted that the only appropriate way to aim at the good is directly rather than indirectly; other rational inquirers may agree to B but only when it is assumed that it is permissible to aim at the good directly and/or indirectly depending on what various empirical calculations dictate. Or one may agree to B when the good is left unspecified but reject it when the good is understood to consist in happiness or pleasure or some other good. Similar problems can be pointed out for P and various renditions of T where the notion of good is also left unspecified. T refers to the notion of consciousness. One might agree to T if consciousness is meant to include only higher-order consciousness, such as virtuous intending, intellectual activities, and the contemplation of beauty, but not if it is meant to include in addition all pleasure, feelings or emotions that do not require a kind of higher-order awareness or consciousness.

By far the most controversial intuition is H. It is not always manifest what Sidgwick believes is self-evident. Is it self-evident that pleasure is the sole ultimate good or is it self-evident that happiness hedonistically construed is the sole ultimate good? The difference between these two is that in the first case it is pleasure that is intrinsically valuable and in the second case it is happiness that is intrinsically valuable and then argued to consist in pleasure. It seems that it is the second claim, but Sidgwick does not properly distinguish between the two. One might agree to the second claim as it is presented in H, but disagree when pleasure is defined in the way that Sidgwick suggests, as 'a feeling which, when experienced by intelligent beings, is at least implicitly apprehended as desirable

or – in cases of comparison – preferable’ (ME 127; see also ME 131, LE 130). Or, one might even agree to the account of pleasure just given but only because one interprets ‘intelligent beings’ in a certain way. What is meant by an ‘intelligent being’? Is this notion meant to include more than fully developed adult humans? If not, then certain individuals may agree with Sidgwick’s claim. But if so, then others may disagree. At times, he substitutes ‘sentient’ for ‘intelligent’ in his definition of pleasure (ME 131, 398). This suggests that he means to include more than simply fully developed adult human beings, and this may lead some to agree to Sidgwick’s claim but it may lead to some disagreeing, especially those who are loath to grant non-human animals moral standing.

Sidgwick, of course, notes that there is deep disagreement about some of his intuitions. He is in fact all too willing to note that the rational egoist rejects P and B and that he cannot convince the egoist of utilitarianism using the Millian-style of proof (ME 420). He ends the work with the dualism of practical reason: both rational egoism and utilitarianism present themselves as equally reasonable though conflicting requirements of reason. This conclusion raises a worry about how Sidgwick understands the relationship between disagreement and his philosophical intuitions. He seems to suggest that where there is disagreement and where we ‘have no more reason to suspect error in the other mind than in my own’, then ‘reflective comparison between the two judgements necessarily reduces me temporarily to a state of neutrality’ (ME 342). If this is the case, then why is he not reduced to a state of neutrality with respect to the intuitions that play a role in the justification of utilitarianism? This seems the more reasonable position to advocate than a dualism of practical reason, the generation of which relies on maintaining the truth of utilitarianism and the intuitions that undergird it. Sidgwick is therefore unclear on just what to do in light of disagreement, and to the extent that he is unclear his argument against dogmatic intuitionism is weakened.<sup>43</sup>

Sidgwick does not deal well with disagreement in other cases. For example, he is aware that many reject his theory of value (ME 401, LE 126). However, in

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<sup>43</sup> Sidgwick is also unclear as to what the clarity and precision test demands. He appears to fault common-sense morality and dogmatic intuitionism for not producing clear and precise practical directives. However, he notes that his own intuitions fail to tell us what to do in particular cases and that they do not give us complete practical guidance (ME 379, 380). He does not claim that they are impugned as a result. This seems unfair to the proponents of common-sense morality and dogmatic intuitionism.

addressing T. H. Green's criticisms of his view, for instance, his tactic is to rearticulate his arguments for H and to raise several objections to Green's own view. Is this sufficient to show that he has more reason to suspect error in Green's mind than in his own? If this is what Sidgwick has in mind, then it is something that he needs to explain better. In his defense of the view of the good in ME he addresses worries that might be raised by adherents of common-sense morality (ME 402ff.), and he employs arguments to show how certain ideal goods (truth, freedom, virtue, and so on) might be understood from a happiness theorist's point of view. But all this shows is that the happiness theorist may be able to make some sense of these rival values; it does not demonstrate that the dissenters are wrong. It is not clear how this might explain away the dissent or show that Sidgwick has more reason to suspect error in the mind of his opponent than his own.

Adherents of Sidgwick's intuitive argument for utilitarianism will need to both clarify his intuitions and respond to critics of them if it is to be acceptable. It will not do to simply state without explanation, as Rashdall does in his endorsement of some of Sidgwick's intuitions, that they 'possess the clearness and definiteness and freedom from self-contradiction which other alleged intuitions so conspicuously lack.'<sup>44</sup>

5. Sidgwick's argument for utilitarianism involves appeal to a number of philosophical intuitions. The nature and number of such intuitions is a matter of scholarly dispute. I have argued that he appeals to six philosophical intuitions in attempting to justify utilitarianism. This appeal is part of his general argument for utilitarianism which includes both a negative argument against common-sense morality and its philosophical counterpart, dogmatic intuitionism, and a Millian-style proof which attempts to convince critics of utilitarianism by reliance on views that they already accept. His argument will not be acceptable until the philosophical intuitions receive further clarification and defense. In particular, Sidgwick and those inclined to defend his argument for utilitarianism must demonstrate that the intuitions themselves meet the requirements that he suggests all self-evident propositions must meet if they are

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<sup>44</sup> Rashdall, *The Theory of Good and Evil*, I, 90.

to function as premises ‘that lead us cogently to trustworthy conclusions’ (ME 338).<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> I wish to thank Wayne Sumner, Thomas Hurka and, especially, Robert Shaver for helpful comments on an earlier draft.

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