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Five Types of Ethical Theory

By

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that there actually is any such being. Thus Kant is entitled only to the hypothetical proposition : " If a perfect God existed he would order the course of Nature so that virtue would receive its appropriate reward in happiness." He is not entitled to the categorical conclusion that such a being exists. (2) It seems to me that there is a certain inconsistency between Kant's position in this argument and his position in the argument for immortality. In the latter it is assumed that we shall not be morally perfect until we have completely got rid of the passive, sensuous, and emotional side of our nature. In the argument about God it is assumed that the happiness, which is an essential feature in the supreme good, is not the mere consciousness of virtue, but is something further added as a reward of virtue. But how could we feel any such happiness if we had no sensations or emotions left ?

CHAPTER VI

Sidgwick

SIDGWICK'S *Methods of Ethics* seems to me to be on the whole the best treatise on moral theory that has ever been written, and to be one of the English philosophical classics. This does not of course imply that Sidgwick was a better man or an acuter thinker than the other writers with whose theories we have been dealing ; for he inherited the results of their labours, and he thus had over them an advantage of the kind which any contemporary student of mathematics or physics has over Newton and Faraday. But, even when this advantage has been discounted, Sidgwick must continue to rank extremely high. He combined deep moral earnestness with complete coolness and absence of moral fanaticism. His capacity for seeing all sides of a question and estimating their relative importance was unrivalled ; his power of analysis was very great ; and he never allowed the natural desire to make up one's mind on important questions to hurry him into a decision where the evidence seemed inadequate or conflicting. Those who, like the present writer, never had the privilege of meeting Sidgwick can infer from his writings, and still more from the characteristic philosophic merits of such pupils of his as M'Taggart and Moore, how acute and painstaking a thinker and how inspiring a teacher he must have been. Yet he has grave defects as a writer which have certainly detracted from his fame. His style is heavy and involved, and he seldom allowed

that strong sense of humour, which is said to have made him a delightful conversationalist, to relieve the uniform dull dignity of his writing. He incessantly refines, qualifies, raises objections, answers them, and then finds further objections to the answers. Each of these objections, rebuttals, rejoinders, and surrejoinders is in itself admirable, and does infinite credit to the acuteness and candour of the author. But the reader is apt to become impatient; to lose the thread of the argument; and to rise from his desk finding that he has read a great deal with constant admiration and now remembers little or nothing. The result is that Sidgwick probably has far less influence at present than he ought to have, and less than many writers, such as Bradley, who were as superior to him in literary style as he was to them in ethical and philosophical acumen. Even a thoroughly second-rate thinker like T. H. Green, by diffusing a grateful and comforting aroma of ethical " uplift ", has probably made far more undergraduates into prigs than Sidgwick will ever make into philosophers. If I can give in my own words an intelligible critical account of Sidgwick's main argument, which will induce some people to read or re-read the *Methods of Ethics* and will furnish them with a guide to it, I shall have done a useful bit of work. They will then be able to study at leisure and without confusion the admirable details, and to fill in those lights and shades which are so important and so characteristic of Sidgwick but are necessarily omitted in the sketch which I offer them.

I will begin with a synopsis of the work, taking the topics in my own order and stating the conclusions in my own words. I shall then give a more detailed critical discussion of each of the main points in the synopsis.

(A) *Logical Analysis of Ethical Terms.*—We constantly make judgments which involve the terms *right, wrong, ought, good, bad,* etc. These may be called " Ethical Judgments ". We must begin by seeing whether the terms *right* and *ought*, on the one hand, and *good*, on the other, are analysable into simpler factors or are logically ultimate. (1) In the case of *ought* we must distinguish between a merely hypothetical and a categorical sense. We certainly do seem to use " ought " in a categorical sense sometimes, and all attempts to define it when used in this sense have failed. It is therefore likely that the categorical ought is a logically primitive term, though it may well be that the *notion of it* has arisen in the course of human history or pre-history from psychological pre-conditions in which it was not present. (2) In the case of *good* we must distinguish between good-as-means and good-as-end, and we may confine our discussion to the latter. There is a long and complex argument, which is not easy to summarise, on the question whether good-as-end is logically analysable. The upshot seems to be that it can be defined in a very complicated way by means of relations to hypothetical desires, and that it does not involve in its analysis any obligation to seek it.

(B) *Epistemological Questions.*—The main question here is as to which of our cognitive faculties is involved in the cognition of ethical terms and propositions. From the discussion of the term *ought* it appears probable that this is an *a priori* concept. Now the recognition of *a priori* concepts and the making of judgments which involve such terms have always been ascribed to Reason. Again, although we no doubt start with singular ethical judgments, such as " That act is wrong ", we never regard them as ultimate and

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as neither needing nor being capable of justification. On the contrary we should always expect to be able to justify our singular judgment by a statement of the form : " That act has such and such a characteristic, and *any* act which had that characteristic would *ipso facto* be wrong." These universal ethical judgments are derived by intuitive induction from inspecting the particular cases which are described in the singular judgments. And this process of seeing that a particular conjunction of characteristics is an instance of a universal and necessary connexion between characteristics has always been ascribed to Reason. So Reason plays an essential part in ethical cognition.

(C) *Psychological Questions about Motives and Volitions.*— (1) Can Reason affect our actions in any other way than by suggesting new means to already desired ends and by calling attention to remote probable consequences ? Sidgwick holds that there is a perfectly definite way, in addition to these two, in which Reason can and does affect our actions. Human beings have an impulse or desire to do what they judge to be right and to shun what they believe to be wrong as such. It is only one motive among others, and it may be, and often is, overcome by others. But it exists and it affects our actions. And it is a motive which could act only on a rational being ; for only such a being could have the *a priori* concept of right or ought. (2) As he holds this view, it is important for him to refute a certain psychological theory which is inconsistent with it and which has been very widely held. This is the doctrine called *Psychological Hedonism*. According to this theory the only motive which can move any human being is the expectation of pleasure or of pain. Sidgwick first clearly distinguishes this from the theory called *Ethical Hedonism*, which asserts

that pleasantness and painfulness are the only characteristics in virtue of which any state of affairs is intrinsically good or bad. He discusses the relations between the two wholly different theories, and shows that Ethical Hedonism cannot be inferred from Psychological Hedonism and can be held consistently by a man who denies Psychological Hedonism. He then discusses and refutes Psychological Hedonism itself.

(D) *Free-will and Determinism.*—The question of motives naturally leads us to that of freedom and determinism. For ethics the question comes to this : " Is there always a possibility of my choosing to act in the manner which I now judge to be reasonable and right, whatever my past actions and experiences may have been ? " There are two points to be considered. (1) What is the right answer to the question ? (2) To what extent is ethics concerned with the question and its answer ? On the first point Sidgwick contends that all argument and analogy is in favour of the determinist view, but that direct inspection is in favour of free-will. Although every yielding to temptation makes it harder to do what one judges to be right, yet at the moment of choice between an alternative which he judges to be right and one which he judges not to be so he cannot doubt that he can choose the former. " The difficulty seems to be separated from impossibility by an impassable gulf." On the second point his view is that a deterministic answer to the question would make very little ethical difference in practice, far less than libertarians have thought. But it would be inconsistent with certain elements in the common - sense notions of merit and demerit, praise and blame, reward and punishment, and remorse for wrong-doing.

(E) *Classification of the Methods of Ethics.*—The subjects which have so far been mentioned are common to all types of ethical theory, though different theories might give different answers to some of the questions which have been raised. We come now to the main purpose of the book, viz., a discussion of the most important Methods of Ethics. By a " Method of Ethics " Sidgwick means roughly any type of general theory which claims to unify our various ethical judgments into a coherent system on some principle which is claimed to be self-evident. In the end he comes to the conclusion that the really important methods of ethics reduce to three, which he calls *Intuitionism, Egoistic Hedonism,* and *Utilitarianism* or *Universalistic Hedonism.* (In this context of course " hedonism " is to be understood as " ethical", not as " psychological ", hedonism.) I think that there is a good deal to be criticised in this classification, but I must reserve my criticisms for the present. Intuition- ism is, roughly speaking, the view that there are a number of fairly concrete ethical axioms of the general form : " Any action of such and such a kind, done in such and such a kind of situation, would be right (or wrong) no matter whether its consequences were good, bad, or indifferent." *E.g.,* common sense would hold that any action which was an instance of deliberate ingratitude to a benefactor would *ipso facto* be wrong, and that this can be seen by direct inspection without any consideration of the consequences of *this* action or of the prevalence of *similar* actions.

Egoistic and Universalistic Hedonism agree in rejecting the view that there are such concrete self-evident ethical axioms as these. Sidgwick points out, what most Egoists and Utilitarians seem to have failed to notice, that Egoism and Utilitarianism cannot do without self-evident ethical

propositions altogether. Both would hold it to be self-evident that nothing is ultimately worth aiming at but pleasure and absence of pain. The Egoist finds it self-evident that an individual ought to aim at a maximum balance of happiness for himself, and that, if necessary, he ought to be ready to sacrifice any amount of other men's happiness in order to produce the slightest nett increase in his own. The Utilitarian, on the other hand, finds it self-evident that each individual ought to aim at the maximum balance of happiness for all sentient beings present and future, and that, if necessary, he ought to be ready to sacrifice any amount of his own happiness provided that he will thereby produce the slightest nett increase in the general happiness. And there might be other very general principles, mainly about the proper distribution of a given amount of happiness, which either Egoists or Utilitarians or both would accept as self-evident. But neither Egoists nor Utilitarians would admit more concrete ethical intuitions than these. Those specific ethical principles, such as the principles of truth-speaking, gratitude to benefactors, etc., which common-sense regards as self-evident and independent of consequences, would be regarded by Egoists and Utilitarians as mere empirical generalisations which tell us what types of action have been found on the whole to maximise individual or general happiness in various commonly recurring types of circumstances. They are thus hypothetical, and not categorical, imperatives ; and, when obedience to them would clearly involve a nett sacrifice of individual or general happiness as compared with the results of breaking them, it is our duty to break them.

(F) *Detailed Discussion of each of the Three Methods.*— Each of the three methods is discussed, so far as possible

by itself.   The order which Sidgwick takes is Egoism, Intuitionism, and Utilitarianism.   This does not seem to me to be the best order, since a great deal of the argument that is used in connexion with Egoistic Hedonism has to be assumed in dealing with Universalistic Hedonism, and the reader is rather liable to forget what has been established in connexion with the former when he emerges into the latter after the very long and complicated discussion on Intuitionism which is sandwiched between the two.   I prefer the order (1) *Intuitionism*, and (2) *Hedonism*.   The latter can then be subdivided into (2, 1) *Hedonism in General*, (2, 2) *Egoistic Hedonism*, and (2, 3) *Universalistic Hedonism*.

(1) *Intuitionism*.—The treatment of this method begins with a discussion of certain general questions, of which the following are the most important.   What is the nature of ethical intuitions, and do they in fact occur ?   What relation, if any, is there between the psycho-genetic history of the occurrence of intuitions and their validity when they have occurred ?   What is the subject-matter of ethical judgments ; are they about acts or intentions or motives or character ? Sidgwick then undertakes an extremely elaborate detailed investigation into the morality of common-sense.   He takes in turn those types of action which seem to common-sense to be self-evidently right (or wrong) without regard to consequences in certain types of situation ; his object being to see whether critical reflexion can extract from common-sense morality a coherent system of self-evident principles connected with each other in a logically satisfactory way. The upshot of the discussion is that, so long as we confine our attention to fairly normal cases and do not try to analyse our terms very carefully, there is a great deal of agreement about what ought and what ought not to be

done in given types of situation, and our duties seem self-evident.   But no sooner do we bring the principles of common-sense morality face to face with difficult and unusual situations than this agreement and this apparent self-evidence vanish.   Terms which seemed clear and simple are found to cover a multitude of alternatives ; and, when these alternatives are explicitly introduced into the statement of an alleged self-evident principle, the latter is liable to reduce to a tautology or to cease to be self-evident, according to which alternative we substitute.   Then again the axioms of common-sense morality seem to conflict with each other in marginal cases.   If we try to enunciate higher principles, which will harmonise the lower ones in a rational way when they conflict and will tell us how far each is to be followed in such cases, we find either that we cannot do it, or that the higher principle is so complicated that we should hesitate to ascribe self-evidence to it, or that we are frankly beginning to take account of remote consequences and thus deserting pure Intuitionism.

As we have already remarked, Sidgwick himself holds that *every* method of ethics must involve at least one intuition ; for at any rate the judgment that we ought to aim at so and so as an ultimate end must be intuitive.   In addition to such intuitions as these he recognised as self-evident a few very abstract principles about the right distribution of happiness.   But these few highly abstract *a priori* principles serve only to delimit an enormous field outside which no action can be right, just as the Conservation of Energy only sets limits to the changes that are physically possible.   Within this field innumerable alternative courses of action are possible, just as there are innumerable possible changes which would satisfy the Conservation of Energy.

To determine which of these alternatives is right we need supplementary and more concrete ethical principles, just as we need the specific laws of physics and mechanics to determine which of the changes compatible with the Conservation of Energy will actually happen. And, on Sidgwick's view, no such concrete ethical principles are intrinsically necessary and self-evident. They are, as Egoism and Utilitarianism teach, mere hypothetical imperatives, to be accepted only as general prescriptions for gaining ends which are judged to be intrinsically desirable.

(2, 1) *Hedonism in General.*—Under this heading two very different questions have to be discussed. One is purely ethical, the other is purely factual and mainly psychological.

(2, 11) *The Ethical Problem.* It seems intuitively certain that we ought to aim at realising the greatest nett balance of good that we can. But this at once leads to the question: " In virtue of what characteristics is a thing, or person, or event, or state of affairs intrinsically good ? " *Prima facie* there would seem to be several characteristics which give intrinsic value to anything that has them. *E.g.*, it would be plausible to hold that a virtuous character has intrinsic value in respect of its virtue, that an acute intellect has intrinsic value in respect of its acuteness, that a beautiful person has intrinsic value in respect of his beauty, and so on. Now the pure ethical hedonist has to show that this is a mistake. He has to show that nothing is intrinsically good or bad except experiences, that no characteristic of an experience has any bearing on its intrinsic value except its pleasantness or painfulness, and that the measure of its intrinsic value is the nett balance of pleasantness over painfulness which characterises it. Sidgwick claims that, when all the numerous sources of illusion which tend to

cloud the issue have been removed and we view the alternatives quite clearly, we are bound to agree with the ethical hedonist.

(2, 12) *The Factual Problem.* Even if ethical hedonism be in fact true, it will be of no use as a practical guide to right conduct unless we can compare pleasures and pains with a fair degree of accuracy and can reach fairly accurate estimates of the nett balance of pleasure in various alternative future experiences which we can initiate by our present choice of action. For the Egoistic Hedonist the problem is confined to his own future experiences during the rest of his life. The Utilitarian is faced with all the problems of the Egoistic Hedonist and with others in addition. For he has to consider how his actions will affect the happiness of all present and future sentient beings throughout the whole of their lives from now onwards. Sidgwick discusses the alleged and the real difficulties of such estimation very elaborately. The uncertainties of direct comparison are very great ; and he concludes that various indirect methods which have been suggested as easier and more accurate cannot dispense with the direct method and have difficulties of their own. Still, we all do make such comparisons and estimates constantly in ordinary life, and we do regard them as reasonably trustworthy when due precautions have been taken. And ethical hedonism only asks us to do in connexion with *all* our conduct what we admittedly do in connexion with a large part of it.

The greater part of Sidgwick's discussion of (2, 2) *Egoistic Hedonism* is concerned with this problem of estimation, which is really common to it and to Universalistic Hedonism.

(2, 3) *Universalistic Hedonism.*—Sidgwick's arguments

for Utilitarianism are of two different kinds. The first is an abstract argument from principles which claim to be self-evident. The second is based on his criticisms of the morality of common-sense.

The essence of the direct abstract argument is this. (*a*) There is a *Total* or *Universal Good*. This is composed of the Goods which reside in individuals and their experiences, and it has no other components. (*b*) Our primary duty is to aim at maximising this Universal Good. We can of course do this only by affecting the amount of Good which resides in this, that, or the other individual. But we ought to aim at the Good of any individual *only* as a factor in the Universal Good. It can therefore never be right to increase the amount of Good which resides in a certain individual or group of individuals if this can be done only at the expense of a reduction in the Universal Good. (*c*) Now it has been argued in connexion with Hedonism in general that nothing is intrinsically good except pleasant experiences, and that the intrinsic goodness of any experience is determined simply by the nett balance of pleasantness over painfulness in it. (*d*) It is therefore my primary duty to aim at increasing the total amount and intensity of pleasant experience and decreasing the total amount and intensity of unpleasant experience in the universe as much as I can. I can do this only by affecting the nett balance of happiness in this, that, and the other individual, including myself. But I must recognise that the happiness of any individual (*e.g.*, myself) or of any group of individuals (*e.g.*, my family or country-men) is to be aimed at *only* as a component of the Universal Happiness ; and that, as such, it is in no way to be preferred to the equal happiness of any other individual or group of individuals. Consequently it is never right to increase the

nett happiness of an individual or a limited group at the expense of a reduction in universal happiness.

It will be seen that in the above argument (*a*) and (*b*) are directed against Egoists, whilst (*c*) is addressed to people who take a non-hedonistic or a not purely hedonistic view of Good. It remains to deal with Intuitionists, in the sense of people who hold that we can see directly that certain types of action would *ipso facto* be right (or wrong) in certain types of situation without regard to the goodness or badness of their consequences. Sidgwick does this by following up his negative treatment of the claims of common-sense morality to furnish a coherent system of self-evident ethical principles with an equally detailed positive discussion of these principles regarded as rules for maximising general happiness in constantly recurring types of situation. The conclusion which he reaches after a very careful examination is that the resemblance between the rules accepted as intuitively certain by common-sense and those which would be reasonable on Utilitarian grounds is close and detailed. In the ordinary cases, where common-sense feels no doubts about its principles, the Utilitarian grounds for the rule are strong and obvious. In the marginal cases, where common-sense begins to feel doubtful about a principle, there are nearly always strong Utilitarian grounds both for obeying the rule and for breaking it. In such cases the Utilitarian solution seems to be generally in accord with the vague instincts of common-sense, and common-sense often explicitly appeals to Utilitarian considerations in such difficulties. Again, the differences between the moral judgments of men of different races or periods about the same type of action can often be explained by Utilitarian considerations. On the whole too the relative importance which common-sense

ascribes to the various virtues is the same as that which would be ascribed to them on Utilitarian grounds.

Sidgwick does not conclude from these facts that our remote ancestors were consciously and deliberately Utilitarians, and that they laboriously derived by observation, induction, and hedonic calculation those general rules which now seem to us directly self-evident. On the contrary, the further we go back in the course of history the less trace do we find of deliberate Utilitarian calculation and inference, and the more immediate and direct do moral judgments become. Still, the distribution of praise, blame, admiration, etc., for character and conduct is very accurately proportional to its apparent effect on general happiness. It seems fair to conclude that common-sense has always been implicitly and unconsciously Utilitarian, and that it tends to become more and more explicitly so as intelligence, sympathy, and experience grow.

This extensive and detailed agreement between Utilitarianism and the morality of common-sense should no doubt help to give us confidence in the former. But, on the present hypothesis, the rules of common-sense morality are traditional prescriptions for maximising general happiness which grew up among our remote ancestors and have been handed down to us. The circumstances under which they arose must have been widely different from those in which we live ; the persons among whom they grew up did not consciously aim at the Utilitarian end ; and, even if they had done so, they must have had a very limited insight into remote consequences, a very restricted range of sympathy, and many superstitious beliefs which would affect their estimates of the happiness to be gained from various courses of action. It is therefore most unlikely that there

would be complete agreement between the rules of common-sense morality and those which an enlightened Utilitarian would lay down at the present day in Western Europe. And, if one is persuaded of the truth of Utilitarianism, one will naturally hold that, where the morality of common-sense differs from that of Utilitarianism, the former is mistaken and ought to be corrected.

It had been fashionable with Utilitarians before Sidgwick's time to insist with a good deal of fervour on this point, and to talk as if Utilitarianism could and should produce a new ethical heaven and earth at very short notice. Sidgwick examines with extreme care and subtlety the duty of a Utilitarian living in a society of non-Utilitarians and convinced that certain of the rules of the current morality are out of accord with his principles. He pours buckets of cold water on the reforming fires of such Utilitarians. When all relevant facts are taken into consideration it will scarcely ever be right on Utilitarian grounds for a Utilitarian openly to break or to recommend others to break the rules of morality commonly accepted in his society.

(G) *The Relations between the Three Methods.*—Sidgwick thinks that in the daily practice of ordinary men all three methods are accepted and used in turn to justify and correlate moral judgments. And it is vaguely assumed that they are mutually consistent, that " honesty in the long run is the best policy ", and that on the whole I shall find my greatest happiness in what produces the greatest happiness for every one. These comfortable assumptions have no doubt a good deal of truth in them so long as one is living a normal life in peaceful times in a well-organised society with fairly decent laws and a fairly enlightened public opinion. But even in these circumstances cases arise from

time to time in which the alternative which would be right according to one method would be wrong according to another. And in less favourable conditions such conflicts might be frequent and glaring. Now, as regards possible conflicts between Intuitionism and Utilitarianism, Sidgwick has no difficulty in deciding. He accepts no moral principles as self-evident except the general principle of Ethical Hedonism and a few highly abstract rules about the right distribution of happiness. The morality of common-sense, so far as it can be justified, must be justified by the Utilitarian method ; and, where it cannot be thus justified, it must be rejected by the moralist in his private thinking, though not necessarily or usually in his public speaking or overt action. If then the choice had lain simply between Intuitionism and Utilitarianism, Sidgwick would definitely have been a Utilitarian, though his Utilitarianism would have involved a few highly abstract intuitions.

But unfortunately the position for him was not so simple as this. He had also to consider the relation between Egoistic and Universalistic Ethical Hedonism, and here he finds an insuperable difficulty. If it be admitted that there is a Total or Universal Good, then it is no doubt my duty to aim at maximising this and to regard the Good which resides in me and my experiences as important only in so far as it is a part of the Total Good. In that case I must be prepared to sacrifice some or all of my Good if by that means and by that only I can increase the Total Good. But the consistent Egoist will not admit that there is a Total or Universal Good. There is my Good and your Good, but they are not parts of a Total Good, on his view. My duty is to aim at maximising my Good, and to consider the effects of my actions on your Good only in so far as

they may indirectly affect mine. Your duty is to aim at maximising your Good, and to consider the effects of your actions on my Good only in so far as they may indirectly affect yours. It is plain that there is no logical inconsistency in this doctrine. And Sidgwick goes further. He says that it is plain that X is concerned with the quality of X's experiences in a way in which he is not concerned with the quality of Y's experiences, whoever Y may be. And it is impossible to feel certain that this distinction is not ethically fundamental. Thus Sidgwick is left in the unfortunate position that there are two principles, each of which separately seems to him self-evident, but which when taken together seem to be mutually inconsistent.

To this logical difficulty he does not, so far as I can see, profess to be able to give any solution. For he proceeds to discuss what is clearly a different point, viz., whether there is any way of convincing an Egoist that he ought always to act *as if* he were a Utilitarian. Even if this could be done, it would of course be no disproof of the truth of Egoism. Nor would it alter or explain the fact that there are two fundamental ethical principles which are mutually incompatible though each seems self-evident. The only sense in which Egoism and Utilitarianism would have been " reconciled " would be that we should have shown that the fundamental theoretical difference between the two should make no difference in practice. We must show that the Universe is so constituted that, whenever obedience to Utilitarian principles would seem to demand a greater sacrifice of happiness on the part of an agent than disobedience to them, this sacrifice is recouped from some source of happiness which escapes the notice of the superficial observer. Such attempted " reconciliations " have

taken two forms, viz. : (1) *Psychological,* and (2) *Metaphysical.* Each is discussed by Sidgwick.

The psychological attempt at reconciliation has been based on the pleasures and pains of sympathy. Sidgwick discusses this solution elaborately and reaches the conclusion that, whilst sympathetic pleasures and pains are extremely important and would go far towards making Egoistic and Utilitarian conduct coincide, yet they will not produce complete identity. Indeed there are certain respects in which the growing intensity of sympathy, when combined with its inevitable limitation of range, would increase the divergence between Egoistic and Utilitarian conduct.

The metaphysical attempt at reconciliation has in Western Europe generally taken the theistic form that there is an all-powerful God who desires the greatest Total Good of all living beings. By rewards and punishments in a future life he will make it worth the Egoist's while to act in such a way as to subserve this end, even when, if this life alone be considered, it would be his duty to act otherwise. Sidgwick recognises that it is not essential that the metaphysical reconciliation should take this theistic form; it would be secured equally well by the Buddhist doctrine of reincarnation. Sidgwick puts aside, as out of place in an ethical treatise, the question whether the existence of a celestial Jeremy Bentham (if we may use the expression with becoming reverence) has been revealed supernaturally or can be established by reasoning from non-ethical premises. But he thinks that it is in place to consider whether anything can be determined on this subject from purely ethical premises. His conclusion seems to be as follows. The hypothesis that the universe is so constituted that to act as a Utilitarian will always be consistent with

the dictates of Egoism is necessary and sufficient to avoid a contradiction in ethics, which is a fundamental department of human thought. Is this any ground for accepting the hypothesis? If we hold that, in other departments of human thought, it is reasonable to accept certain general principles (*e.g.,* the Uniformity of Nature), which are not self-evident nor capable of proof by problematic induction, simply because they introduce order and coherence which would otherwise be lacking, then it would seem to be inconsistent to object to moralists for doing likewise. But Sidgwick expresses no opinion here as to whether in other departments of thought men do *in fact* assume such principles; or whether, *if* they do, they are justified.

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I have now completed what I hope is a fair and clear account of the main contents of Sidgwick's *Methods of Ethics.* I have refrained from all criticism, and I have not entered into the details of his arguments. I propose now to take the main points of the synopsis in order; to give a somewhat more detailed account of Sidgwick's views on each; and to make such criticisms or comments as seem to me desirable.

(A) LOGICAL ANALYSIS OF ETHICAL TERMS: (1) *Ought and Right.* The main discussion on this subject is to be found in *Book I, Chap. III.*

(1, 1) We must begin by distinguishing a narrower and a wider sense of " ought ". In its narrower sense it applies only to actions which an agent could do if he willed. But there is a wider sense in which there is no such implication. We can say that sorrow ought to have been felt by a certain man at the death of a certain relation, though it was not in his power to feel sorrow at will. And we can say that virtue ought to be rewarded.

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(1, 2) There is another distinction to be drawn between what I will call the *deontological*, the *teleological*, and the *logical* application of " ought ". Some people judge that there are certain types of action which ought to be done (or avoided) in all or in certain types of situation, regardless of the goodness or badness of the probable consequences. This is what I call the " deontological " application of " ought ". Now there are people who would deny that they ever make such judgments as these. But such people may, nevertheless, make the judgment that every one ought to aim at certain ends without any ulterior motive, *e.g.*, at his own greatest happiness, at the greatest happiness of all sentient beings, and so on. This is what I call the " teleological " application of " ought ". Sidgwick suggests that many people who say that they have no notion of unconditional obligation merely mean that they never use " ought " in the deontological application though they may quite well use it in the teleological application. Lastly, it is conceivable that there are people who not only do not recognise any types of action as being obligatory apart from all consideration of the goodness of their consequences, but also do not recognise that there are any ends which every one ought to aim at. Every one must admit indeed that there are ends which are *in fact* ultimate for a given individual, *i.e.*, things that he does in fact desire directly and not merely as a means to something else. But it might be said that there is nothing of which it could be held that every one *ought* to desire it as an end. Even so, as Sidgwick points out, there is an application of " ought " which such people would make. If a certain man does in fact take a certain end as ultimate for him then he *ought* to be consistent about it. He ought to take such means as

he believes will tend to bring it into being, and he ought not to do things which he believes will be inconsistent with its realisation. That people can and do will ends and then fail to will what they believe to be the right means to them is certain. And we do say that no one ought to act in this inconsistent way. This is the logical application of " ought ".

It will be noted that I have been careful to talk of three different *applications*, and not of three different *meanings*, of " ought " We have now to consider whether these different applications do involve different meanings, and also how they are related to the distinction which we have already drawn between the wider and the narrower sense of " ought ". The position seems to me to be as follows : (*a*) " Ought ", when used in its teleological application, is used in its wider sense. For in this application we say that every one ought to desire so-and-so as an ultimate end. Now it is plain that we cannot desire this or that at will, any more than we can love this or that person at will. Thus to say that each ought to desire the happiness of all is like saying that every one ought to love his parents and is not like saying that every one ought to speak the truth. (*b*) " Ought ", when used in its logical application, would seem to be used in its narrower sense. For we believe that it is within the power of any sane human being to be consistent if he tries. Thus to say that anyone who adopts an end as ultimate for him ought to adopt what he believes to be the means to it is like saying that every one ought to tell the truth and is not like saying that every one ought to love his parents. In fact it seems to me that the logical ought is just a special case of the deontological ought. Its main interest is that it is recognised by people who would not

admit that they could recognise any other instance of the deontological ought.

(1, 3) We must now say something about the relations between " right " and " ought ". This will enable us to say something further about the relations between the narrower and the wider senses of " ought ". (a) Any action that I ought to do would be right for me to do. But there might be several alternative actions open to me all of which were equally right. In that case it cannot be said of any one of them that I ought to do *it*; it could only be said that I ought to do *one or other* of these actions, and that it was indifferent which I did. (b) Even if only one course of action open to me were right, or if one alternative were more right than any of the others, we should not necessarily say that I ought to do that action. We tend to confine the word " ought ", in its narrower sense, to cases where we believe that there are motives and inclinations against doing the rightest action open to the agent. Thus, as Sidgwick points out, we should hardly say of an ordinary healthy man that he *ought*, in the narrower sense, to take adequate nourishment; though we might say this of an invalid with a disinclination to take food or of a miser. And, although we hold that God acts rightly, we should hesitate to say that he always does as he ought or does his duty. Such notions would seem inappropriate to a being who is supposed to have no inclinations to do what is wrong or to leave undone what is right. (c) It seems to me that, when I speak of anything as " right ", I am always thinking of it as a factor in a certain wider total situation, and that I mean that it is " appropriately " or " fittingly " related to the rest of this situation. When I speak of anything as " wrong " I am thinking of it as " inappropriately " or " unfittingly "

related to the rest of the situation. This is quite explicit when we say that love is the right emotion to feel to one's parents, or that pity and help are the right kinds of emotion and action in presence of undeserved suffering. This relational character of rightness and wrongness tends to be disguised by the fact that some types of action are commonly thought to be wrong absolutely; but this, I think, means only that they are held to be unfitting to *all* situations. What I have just asserted is not, and does not pretend to be, an analytical *definition* of " right " and " wrong ". It does bring out their relational character, and it correlates them with certain other notions. But the kind of appropriateness and inappropriateness which is implied in the notions of " right " and " wrong " is, so far as I can see, specific and unanalysable.

Now, so far as I can see, the wider sense of " ought " reduces to that of right, together with the associated notion that, if the right state of affairs were in the power of anyone to produce, he ought to produce it. Take, *e.g.*, the statement that virtue ought to be rewarded. This means primarily that it is right that virtue should be accompanied by happiness, that the one is fitting to the other. In so far as it means more than this the further implication is that anyone who had it in his power to make the virtuous happy would be under an obligation to do so. I think therefore that there is no need to hold that " ought-to-be " is a third independent notion in addition to " right " and " ought-to-do ". For it seems that " ought-to-be " can be analysed in terms of " right " together with a hypothetical reference to what a being who had it in his power to produce the right state of affairs " ought to do ".

(d) " Ought ", in the narrower sense in which in future

I propose to use it, seems to be bound up with the following facts. (i) That a man's belief that a certain action which is in his power is right is a motive for doing it, and that his belief that a certain state of affairs which he could help to bring about would be good is a motive for aiming at it. (ii) That human beings are subject to other motives which may and often do conflict with this one. And (iii) that, in cases of conflict, it is right that this motive should win. When such a conflict is actually taking place we have a peculiar emotional experience which may be called a " feeling of obligation ".

(1, 4) In the above discussion I have in places wandered far from Sidgwick, though I do not know that I have said anything that he would deny. We come now to a question which he discusses very fully : " Can the term ' right ' be analysed into a combination of other, and not specifically ethical, terms ? " To hold that it can is to hold a naturalistic theory as regards right. Sidgwick's method is to take the most plausible of the naturalistic analyses, and to try to show that they are inadequate. It of course remains possible that some day some more subtle naturalistic analysis may be proposed, and that this will be immune to Sidgwick's criticisms. But this has not in fact happened up to now. The objections have often been ignored, but they have never been answered.

Sidgwick takes four suggested analyses for discussion. (a) It might be suggested that when I say that X is right I mean simply that it excites in me a certain kind of feeling of approval. Since people certainly argue with each other about right and wrong, this can hardly be their primary meaning. But it might be said that this is all that they ever have any *ground* for asserting ; and that they carelessly

put their judgment in an impersonal form, as a man might do if he said that the taste of onions is nasty, though he really means no more than that he dislikes the taste of onions. I think it is obvious that this extremely subjective view will not fit the facts. At the very least I must mean that X would evoke a feeling of approval in all or most people on all or most occasions when they contemplated it.

It is clear that the theory could be most satisfactorily refuted if it could be shown that I sometimes reverse the judgment about X whilst my emotion towards it remains unchanged, or that my emotion towards X sometimes changes its determinate form whilst my judgment about X remains unchanged. Sidgwick, however, does not claim that this happens. What he says is that my judgment may change from " X is wrong " to " X is right ", and I may still feel towards X an emotion which resembles that which I formerly felt. But, on careful introspection, it is found to be no longer moral disapproval but a " *quasi*-moral feeling of repugnance ". This fact is important in so far as it enables us to distinguish the feeling of moral approval and disapproval from other pairs of opposed emotions which often accompany that feeling and are liable to be mistaken for it. It is, *e.g.*, clear that, in the case of unusual sexual practices, the majority of normal people constantly mistake what is in fact a *quasi*-moral feeling of repugnance for a genuine feeling of moral disapproval. But I cannot see that the fact is incompatible with the theory of the meaning of " right " which Sidgwick is attacking. For in his example it is surely possible that at first I feel moral disapproval mixed with *quasi*-moral repugnance, and that later I feel moral approval mixed with *quasi*-moral repugnance. And

the supporters of the present theory could say that my first judgment expressed the fact that I was feeling moral disapproval; my second expresses the fact that I am feeling moral approval; and the constant factor of *quasi*-moral repugnance does not enter into either judgment. Sidgwick's conclusion that the moral emotion is *causally determined* by the moral judgment, and therefore cannot be the *subject-matter* of the judgment, is compatible with the facts but is not necessitated by them.

(b) The second analysis is that when I say that X is right I mean that I have a feeling of approval towards it and also sympathetic representations of other men's similar feelings. To this Sidgwick answers that I may begin to feel moral disapproval of an action which I once approved, whilst my fellow-men continue to feel moral approval of it. Or, again, I might go on feeling moral approval after other men had begun to feel moral disapproval. In such cases the sympathetic representation of other men's similar feelings has ceased. Nevertheless I should begin to judge that the action is wrong in the first case, and I should continue to judge that it is right in the second case. It is of course true that the sympathetic representation of the similar feelings of others generally accompanies and supports my moral judgments. But this is because my judgments generally agree with those of others, and this agreement increases my conviction of the truth of my own judgments.

(c) The third analysis is that when I say that X is right I mean that other men will feel approval towards *me* if I do X and will feel disapproval towards *me* if I omit to do X. This theory, as Sidgwick says, does bring out a certain analogy between moral and legal right. An action is legally wrong if it will be punished by the law; and, on this theory,

it is morally wrong if it will be punished by the pains of public disapprobation. But it is plain that the analogy is only partial, and that the theory is inadequate. For we admit that there are things which it is right to do, but which will call forth public disapproval; and conversely. We often hold that public opinion distributes its approvals and disapprovals *wrongly*; and it seems clear that such judgments involve a sense of "wrong" which cannot be analysed in terms of public approval and disapproval. Lastly, if I say to a man: "You will be wrong if you do so and so, and public opinion will be against you," the second part of my admonition is clearly not a mere repetition of the first, as it should be on the present theory. It is true that there are *quasi*-moral judgments, just as there are *quasi*-moral emotions. The words "right" and "wrong" in such judgments *do* mean no more than "evoking social approval" and "evoking social disapproval" respectively. The codes of honour, of fashion, etc., consist of such judgments. And unreflective people do not sharply distinguish them from genuine moral judgments. But, when we reflect, we do seem to see that there is a fundamental difference between the *quasi*-moral judgment: "It is wrong to wear brown boots with a morning-coat" and the genuinely moral judgment: "It is wrong to inflict pain on innocent persons except as a means to removing some greater evil." The distinction becomes most clear when one and the same action is the object of moral approval and *quasi*-moral disapproval, or conversely. This difference seems plainly to exist within my experience; but I cannot help being somewhat perturbed to find that there are important departments of conduct in which judgments which seem to most people to be clearly moral seem to me equally clearly to be

only *quasi*-moral. I have no doubt that *they* are mistaken in thinking these judgments moral (though it is of course possible that I suffer from moral obtuseness), but I cannot help wondering whether the few judgments which seem to me so clearly moral may not really be only *quasi*-moral judgments which have so far resisted my attempts at ethical scepticism.

(*d*) The fourth analysis is that to say that X is right or that it is wrong means respectively that one will be rewarded or punished by God if one does it. To this Sidgwick answers that people certainly make moral judgments and feel moral emotions without holding this particular form of theism. Moreover, those who believe that God will in fact reward certain actions and punish certain others generally believe that he will do so *because* the former are independently right and the latter independently wrong. Lastly, although we should not say that it is God's *duty* to act justly, because we think of him as not subject to any opposing impulses, we should say that it is *right* for him to do so. And we certainly do not mean that he will be punished by himself if he does not.

Sidgwick concludes that the notions of right and wrong are probably logically simple and so incapable of analysis. Even if his list of attempted analyses covers all the possibilities, which we cannot safely assume, there remains a point of formal logic to be mentioned. Strictly speaking, he has shown only that " right " does not *always* mean any *one* of these. It remains logically possible that it always means *one or other* of them, sometimes one and sometimes another. If so, it is a fundamentally ambiguous word. What he needs to show is that there is a meaning of " right " which does not coincide with any of these alternatives, and that it is used with this sense in ethical judgments. I am inclined

to think that this is true ; but Sidgwick's argument does not strictly suffice to prove it.

(1, 5) It remains to be noticed that Sidgwick clearly points out that the logical simplicity of the term *right* neither entails nor is incompatible with the psychological primitiveness of the notion of right in the human mind. It is quite possible that the notion may have arisen in the course of evolution, and that we can point out the other notions which have preceded it. Some people have imagined that, if this could be done, it would follow that *right* cannot be logically simple but must be composed of the terms which are the objects of these psychologically earlier notions. This, as Sidgwick remarks, is to carry over to psychology the chemical theory that the resultant of the interaction of several elements is composed of those elements, still persisting in a disguised form, and of nothing else. Even in chemistry this is a bit of highly speculative metaphysics, if taken literally. But at least it is a convenient way of summing up certain important observable facts, such as the constancy of mass, the fact that a compound can be repeatedly generated by the disappearance of its elements and the elements be regenerated by the destruction of the compound, and so on. There are absolutely no facts in psychology which bear the least analogy to these ; and so there is no justification for treating the products of psychological development as if they were compounds containing their antecedents as elements.

(2) *Good*. Sidgwick does not treat the term *Good* until *Book I, Chap. IX* is reached. But this seems to be the proper place to deal with it.

(2, 1) The first question to be considered is whether " goodness " can be defined in terms of pleasantness. In

this discussion it will be well to remember the distinction which I drew, in connexion with Hume's theory, between non-causal pleasantness, which can belong only to experiences and which makes such experiences pleasures, and causal pleasantness, which can belong to other things beside experiences. It will be remembered that the statement that X is " causally pleasant " means that there is at least one mode of cognising X which is at most times and for most men a pleasant experience.

Now, when we talk of " good " wine or " good " pictures, it does seem at first sight that we mean simply wine which is pleasant to taste or pictures which are pleasant to see. And so it seems as if " goodness ", in these cases at any rate, could be identified with causal pleasantness. But, even when we confine ourselves to such things as wines and pictures, there are serious difficulties, which Sidgwick points out, in this view. We distinguish between good and bad *taste* in such matters. A " good " picture could hardly be defined as one which most men at most times find it pleasant to contemplate. We should rather be inclined to say that it is one which persons *of good taste* in such matters find it pleasant to contemplate. But then we are defining " goodness ", as applied to pictures, not simply in terms of causal pleasantness, but in terms of this and " goodness " as applied to taste. And it seems as if " goodness ", in the latter sense, involved some reference to a supposed objective standard, and could not itself be defined in terms of causal pleasantness. Then, again, it must be admitted that a bad picture or wine may not only please more people than a better one, but may also give more intense pleasure to those whom it pleases. The *blasé* expert may get very little pleasure from seeing pictures or tasting wines which

he recognises to be very good, whilst he may get acute discomfort from wines and pictures which give intense pleasure to less sophisticated people of crude tastes and strong susceptibilities.

Suppose now that we pass regretfully from wines and pictures to character and conduct. If we say that a " good " character means one which spectators find it pleasant to contemplate, we shall be back in the difficulties which arose over wines and pictures. We shall have to say that the pleasure must be of a certain specific kind, that it will be felt only by people of good moral taste, and that even in them it may not excite a degree of pleasure proportional to its goodness. It seems almost certain that the contemplation of the character and conduct of the heroes and heroines of the films has given far more intense and widespread pleasure than the contemplation of the character and conduct of Socrates or St. Paul. If, on the other hand, we take a wider definition, and say that " good " character or conduct *means* character or conduct which is either immediately pleasant or productive of pleasure on the whole and in the long run, we seem to be asserting that the fundamental doctrine of Hedonism is a tautology like the statement that the rich and only the rich are wealthy. Now Hedonism, whether true or false, has seldom seemed to its supporters and never to its opponents to be a mere tautology which is true *ex vi termini*.

I am not prepared to accept this last argument of Sidgwick's, for I believe that it rests on a very common confusion between analytical propositions and verbal or tautological propositions. It seems clear to me that a term may in fact be complex and in fact have a certain analysis, and that people may yet use it in the main correctly

without recognising that it is complex or knowing the right analysis of it. In that case the proposition which asserts that it has such and such an analysis will be analytic, but will not be tautologous. It therefore seems to me that " good " might *mean* immediately pleasant or conducive to pleasure in the long run, and yet that people who use the word " good " correctly might quite well fail to recognise that this is the right analysis of the term which the word denotes. I agree with Sidgwick in thinking that this is not in fact the meaning of the word " good ", but I deny that his argument proves his conclusion.

(2, 2) We pass now to a second suggestion, viz., that " good " can be defined in terms of desire. In this connexion Sidgwick makes a very important point which he hardly stresses enough, so that the reader may easily overlook it. I will therefore begin by making this point quite explicit. It concerns the ambiguity of the word " desirable." In criticising Mill at our mother's knee we all learnt one ambiguity of this word, viz., that it may mean *capable of being desired* or *fit to be* desired. The first meaning might be called the " purely positive meaning " and the second might be called the " ethically ideal meaning ". The important point which Sidgwick makes is that there is a third sense, which might be called the " positively ideal meaning ". In this sense " X has such and such a degree of desirability for me " means that I *should* desire X with such and such an intensity *if* I knew that it were attainable by voluntary action and *if* I could forecast with complete accuracy what my experience would be on attaining X. We must now notice that what is highly desirable, in this sense, if it could be got apart from its consequences, might have highly undesirable results. Among these results is the fact that

the indulgence of desire A may strengthen it and cause desire B to weaken or vanish ; and yet B may be a more desirable desire, in the sense defined, than A. We thus come to the notion of " the most desirable future for me on the whole from now on ".

This, according to Sidgwick, may be defined as that state of affairs which I should now choose in preference to any other that I could initiate at the time, provided that I had completely accurate knowledge of this and of all practically possible alternatives, and provided that I could accurately forecast what my experiences would be on the supposition that each alternative were realised. It will be noted that this would involve a knowledge of how my desires and feelings are going to alter in the course of my life, either as a result of my present choice or from causes outside my control. It is evident that this notion is " ideal ", in the sense in which the notion of a perfect gas or a frictionless fluid is ideal. But, like those notions, it is purely positive ; it involves in its analysis no reference to obligation or fittingness. The suggestion is that this is what is meant by " my good on the whole ". He says that it seems paradoxical to suppose that " my good on the whole " can mean anything so complicated as this. And yet (*Methods of Ethics*, Sixth Edition, p. 112) he seems inclined to think that this may be the correct analysis of the term. And, for reasons which I have already given, I see no objection to the view that a term with which we are quite familiar may in fact have a very complicated and unfamiliar analysis.

In the second paragraph of the same page he goes on to say : " It seems to me, however, more in accordance with common-sense to recognise, as Butler does, that the calm

desire for my good on the whole is *authoritative* ; and therefore carries with it implicitly a rational dictate to aim at this end, if in any case a conflicting desire urges the will in an opposite direction." It is not perfectly clear to me what he wishes us to infer from this statement. He might mean (*a*) that the purely positive, though ideal, definition of " my greatest good on the whole " is adequate ; but that it is a *synthetic* and necessary proposition that I *ought* to desire my greatest good on the whole, thus defined. Or (*b*) he might mean that the purely positive definition is not adequate, and that " good " cannot be *defined* without reference to the ethical notion of " ought " or " right ". It seems fairly clear from the latter part of this paragraph that he takes the second view. " My greatest good on the whole " is what I *ought* to desire, assuming that only my own existence were to be considered. And " *the* greatest good on the whole " is what I *ought* to desire when I give the *right* amount of importance to all other individuals as well as myself. (Sidgwick says " *equal* importance ". But this prejudges the question whether equality is the right relative importance of myself and others.)

This seems to be Sidgwick's conclusion, but I must confess that I find his discussion very complicated and the result not very clearly stated. Assuming this to be the right interpretation, there remains one further question to be raised. It follows, no doubt, that a purely positive definition of " good " has been found to be impossible. But is *any* definition possible ? Granted that the two propositions " X is the greatest good on the whole for me " and " X is what I ought to desire when I take account only of my own existence " are *logically equivalent*, is the second *an analysis of* the first ? This does not seem to me at all

obvious. It is surely possible that both " good " and " right " are indefinable, as both " shape " and " size " are, and yet that there is a synthetic, necessary, and mutual relation between them, as there is between shape and size.

(B) EPISTEMOLOGICAL QUESTIONS. I have discussed the epistemology of ethics very fully in connexion with Hume, and can therefore afford to be brief here. Sidgwick's argument begins in the last paragraph of p. 33 in the Sixth Edition. It may be summarised as follows. We have come to the conclusion that there are judgments which use certain specific and indefinable ethical notions, such as *right* and *ought*. We may ascribe such judgments to a faculty of Moral Cognition, without thereby assuming that any of them are true. Can this faculty be identified with, or regarded as a species of, any of the familiar cognitive faculties which deal with non-ethical matters ? In particular, is it analogous to Sense or to Reason ? It is not plausible to suppose that all moral judgments are the results of reason*ing* from self-evident general principles to particular cases. On the contrary it is quite plausible to hold that the faculty of Moral Cognition primarily pronounces singular judgments on particular cases as they arise. And this might make it appear that this faculty is more analogous to Sense than to Reason. But (*a*) this suggests that it involves sensations or feelings, which might vary from man to man, and that there could be no question of truth or falsity and no real differences of opinion on ethical matters. And (*b*) even if we start with singular ethical judgments, we never remain content with them or regard them as ultimate. If I judge that X is wrong I always think it reasonable to be asked for a ground for my assertion. And

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the ground would always take the form : " X has certain non-ethical characteristics C, and it is evident that anything which had these characteristics would be wrong." These general principles are reached from particular cases by acts of intuitive induction, and this is a typical act of Reason. Moreover, there are certain very abstract general principles which form an essential part of Ethics, though they do not suffice to tell us our duties in particular cases. An example is that it is wrong to give benefits to or impose sacrifices on A rather than B unless there be some ground, other than the mere numerical difference between A and B, for treating them differently. Such principles can be grasped only by Reason.

After what I have said in connexion with Hume I need make only the following comments. (a) The essential point is that Ethics involves both a priori concepts and a priori judgments ; and these, by definition, are the work of Reason. We may therefore admit that Reason is essential in ethical cognition. But (b) analogy would suggest that it is not sufficient. In other departments of knowledge Reason does not form a priori concepts unless and until it is presented with suitable materials to reflect upon by Sense-perception. Thus, e.g., it may well be that, unless our sensations had very often come in recurrent bundles, we should never have reached the a priori concept of Substance ; and that, unless there had been a good deal of regularity in sense-perception, we should never have reached the a priori concept of Cause. It therefore seems likely that something analogous to sense-perception is necessary, though not sufficient, in ethical cognition. It is difficult to suppose that ordinary sense-perception can play the required part. But it does seem to me plausible to suppose that this part may be played by emotions of moral approval and dis-

approval. The statement that X is wrong is not, in my opinion, a statement about my own or other men's emotions of disapproval ; just as the statement that X causes Y is not, in my opinion, a statement about the regular sequence of Y-like events on X-like events. But it seems to me arguable that wrongness would never have been recognised by Reason without the stimulus and suggestion of the emotion of disapproval, and that causation would never have been recognised by Reason without the stimulus and suggestion of perceived regular sequence. I do not think that this is in any way incompatible with the fact that now, in many cases, the judgment that so-and-so is wrong may precede and causally determine an emotion of moral disapproval towards so-and-so.

(C) PSYCHOLOGICAL QUESTIONS ABOUT MOTIVES AND VOLITIONS : (1) Reason as Motive. Here again, after what I have said in connexion with Hume and with Kant, there is very little for me to add. It is a fact that in most human beings the belief that a certain course of action is right, whatever their criterion of rightness may be, is pro tanto a motive for doing it ; and it is a fact that the belief that a certain course of action is wrong is pro tanto a motive against doing it. We are perfectly familiar with this motive and can watch its conflict with other motives. It is a further fact that, when it does conflict with other motives, we judge that it is right that it and not they should prevail. This, I take it, is what is meant by the " authority " of this motive, which moralists insist upon and which Butler contrasts with its actual psychological power. Now rightness and wrongness, as we have seen, are characteristics which can be grasped only by a rational being, since the concepts

of them are *a priori*. It follows that this kind of motive can act *only* on a rational being. It does not follow that it *must* act on every rational being, as such ; unless you choose to define " rational being " in such a way as to include the property of being susceptible to this motive. With these explanations and qualifications it seems clear to me that " Reason is a motive," though I think that this is an abominably loose way of expressing the very important facts which it is meant to convey.

(2) *Psychological Hedonism.* This is the doctrine that my volitions are determined wholly and solely by my pleasures and pains, present and prospective. It is thus a particular species of Psychological Egoism. It is not the only species ; one might quite well be a Psychological Egoist without being a Psychological Hedonist, and, so far as I can see, T. H. Green in his *Prolegomena to Ethics* and Bradley in his *Ethical Studies* are non-hedonistic psychological egoists. It is plain that any refutation of the generic doctrine of Psychological Egoism would, *ipso facto*, be a refutation of its specifically hedonistic form, whilst the converse would not be true. We have already considered at some length attempted refutations of Psychological Egoism by Butler and by Hume. But Sidgwick's is probably the best discussion of the whole subject that exists. We have to deal with two questions, viz. : (2, 1) the relation or want of relation between Psychological and Ethical Hedonism, and (2, 2) the truth or falsehood of Psychological Hedonism itself.

(2, 1) Since Ethical Hedonism can take either an egoistic or a universalistic form, we must consider in turn the relation of Psychological Hedonism to (2, 11) Egoistic Ethical Hedonism, and (2, 12) Universalistic Ethical Hedonism or

Utilitarianism. Sidgwick discusses the first point in *Book I, Chap. IV, Sect.* 1 of the *Methods of Ethics*. He discusses the second rather briefly in *Book III, Chap. XIII, Sect.* 5.

(2, 11) Egoistic Ethical Hedonism is the doctrine that it is my duty to aim at the greatest possible amount of happiness in my own life, and to treat all other objects as subservient to this end. Now, Sidgwick argues, it cannot be my duty to aim at anything which it would be psychologically impossible for me to aim at. So, if Psychological Hedonism implies that it is psychologically impossible for me to aim at anything but my own greatest happiness, it implies that any ethical theory which says that it is my duty to aim at any other end must be false. It would thus entail the *rejection* of all *rival* ethical theories, though not necessarily the *acceptance* of Egoistic Ethical Hedonism. On the other hand, it can hardly be said to be my duty to aim at my own greatest happiness unless it be psychologically possible for me to aim at something else instead. For duty seems to imply the existence of motives which may conflict with the one which it is a duty to obey. It seems to follow that Psychological Hedonism, if taken to mean that I can aim only at my own greatest happiness, is incompatible with *every* ethical theory, including Egoistic Ethical Hedonism. If, however, Psychological Hedonism, whilst holding that nothing can act on my will except my present and prospective pleasures and pains, admits that I may wittingly or unwittingly prefer what will give me less pleasure or more pain to what will give me more pleasure or less pain, this conclusion will not follow. Although, even in this form, it will not *entail* Egoistic Ethical Hedonism (for no purely psychological theory could entail any purely ethical theory), still Egoistic Ethical Hedonism might fairly

be regarded as the only reasonable ethical theory to hold in the circumstances.

This is the gist of Sidgwick's doctrine of the connexion or lack of connexion between the two theories. It may be remarked that, if it be valid, it would apply equally to *any* psychological theory which asserted that there is one and only one object which I can desire as an end. For I could be under no obligation to aim at any *other* end, since this would be psychologically impossible for me. And I could be under no obligation to aim at *this* end, since there could be no motives conflicting with my desire for it. But, although the notion of *duty* or *obligation* would have ceased to apply, the notion of *right* might still have application. It might be the case that the only end which I *can* desire is also the end which it is *right* or appropriate or fitting for me to desire. I should simply be in the position of God, who is assumed to be incapable by nature of desiring anything but what is right for him to desire.

Even if Psychological Hedonism be put in the extreme form that I can desire nothing but my greatest happiness on the whole, this must presumably mean that I shall always choose at any moment that course which then *seems to me* to involve most private happiness. This may differ from the course which would *in fact* involve most private happiness. Thus, even on this interpretation of Psychological Hedonism, the agent might diverge from the ideal of Egoistic Ethical Hedonism through intellectual defects, though not through succumbing to the influence of rival motives. But, on the more usual interpretation, he can also diverge from the ideal of Egoistic Ethical Hedonism through volitional and emotional defects. Though nothing can move him but the expectation of private pleasure or

pain, he may prefer a nearer, shorter, and intenser pleasure to a more distant, longer, and more diffused pleasure, though he recognises that the latter is greater than the former. Or he may refuse to purchase what he recognises to be a more than equivalent future pleasure at the cost of suffering a present short intense pain. In deciding whether to have a tooth stopped or not we may be moved by none but hedonistic considerations, and we may recognise that there will be a nett balance of happiness in having it stopped ; and yet the prospect of immediate intense pain may prevent us from going to the dentist. Such a decision will certainly be wrong on the theory of Egoistic Ethical Hedonism, and we can say that the agent *ought* to have gone to the dentist if we accept this milder form of Psychological Hedonism.

(2, 12) Universalistic Ethical Hedonism is the doctrine that it is the duty of each to aim at the maximum happiness of all, and to subordinate everything else to this end. It is perfectly plain that this ethical theory is incompatible with *any* form of Psychological Egoism, and therefore with Psychological Hedonism. For Psychological Egoism denies that anyone can desire as an end anything but some state of himself, *e.g.*, his own happiness or the greatest development of all his faculties. And if, as would follow, no one can desire as an end the happiness of humanity in general, this cannot be the right or fitting object of anyone's desire, nor can it be anyone's duty to aim at this end.

Yet Mill, in his *Utilitarianism*, professed to deduce Universalistic Hedonism from Psychological Hedonism. Mill starts by assuming that " desirable " means " desired by someone." Though this rests on a confusion which we have already noted, there is no need to insist on that fact here.

For Mill's argument involves another fallacy which would invalidate it even though the above premise were granted. The argument may be put as follows. If Psychological Hedonism be true, each man's happiness is desired by someone, viz., by himself. Therefore each man's happiness is desirable. But the happiness of humanity is simply the whole composed of the happinesses of each man and of nothing else. Mill concludes that the happiness of humanity is desirable. But the only legitimate conclusion from these premises is that the happiness of humanity is a whole composed of a set of parts each one of which is desirable. It does not follow from this that the happiness of humanity is itself desirable. For, on Mill's definition of " desirable ", this would mean that the happiness of humanity is desired by someone. And it does not follow from the fact that every part of this whole is desired by someone that the whole itself is desired by anyone. On the contrary, it would follow from the premise that no one can desire anything but his own happiness, that no one can desire the happiness of humanity ; and therefore, on Mill's definition, that the happiness of humanity is *not* desirable.

(2, 2) Having now considered the relation of Psychological Hedonism to the two forms of Ethical Hedonism, we can deal with the question whether Psychological Hedonism be itself true. Let us begin with certain undoubted facts which must be admitted. The belief that a future experience will be pleasant is *pro tanto* a motive for trying to get it, and the belief that it will be painful is *pro tanto* a motive for trying to avoid it. Again, the felt pleasantness of a present pleasant experience is *pro tanto* a motive for trying to make it last, whilst the felt painfulness of a present experience is *pro tanto* a motive for trying to make it stop.

The question is whether the expected pleasantness of a future experience is the only feature in it which can make us want to get it, whether the felt pleasantness of a present experience is the only feature in it which can make us want to prolong it, whether the expected painfulness of a future experience is the only feature in it which can make us want to avoid it, and whether the felt painfulness of a present experience is the only feature in it which can make us want to get rid of it.

I must begin with one explanatory remark which is necessary if the above proposition is to be taken as a perfectly accurate statement of Psychological Hedonism. No sane Psychological Hedonist would deny that a pleasure which is believed to be longer and less intense may be preferred for its greater duration to one which is believed to be shorter and more intense. Nor would he deny that a nearer and less intense pleasure may be preferred for its greater nearness to a more intense but remoter pleasure. And this implies that duration and remoteness are in some sense factors which affect our desires as well as pleasantness and painfulness. This complication may be dealt with as follows. There are certain determinable characteristics which every event, as such, must have. Date of beginning and duration are examples. There are others which an event may or may not have. Pleasantness, colour, and so on, are examples. Let us for the present call them respectively " categorial " and " non-categorial " determinable characteristics of events. Then the accurate statement of Psychological Hedonism would be as follows. No non-categorial characteristic of a present or prospective experience can move our desires for or against it except its hedonic quality ; but, granted that it has hedonic quality, the effect on our

desires is determined jointly by the determinate form of this and by the determinate forms of its categorial characteristics.

Now, so far as I am aware, no argument has ever been given for Psychological Hedonism except an obviously fallacious one which Mill produces in his *Utilitarianism*. He says there that " to desire " anything and " to find " that thing " pleasant " are just two different ways of stating the same fact. Yet he also appeals to careful introspection in support of Psychological Hedonism. Sidgwick points out that, if Mill's statement were true, there would be no more need of introspection to decide in favour of the doctrine than there is need for introspection to decide that " to be rich " and " to be wealthy " are two different expressions for the same fact. But, as he also points out, Mill is deceived by a verbal ambiguity. There is a sense of " please " in English in which the two phrases " X pleases me " and " I desire X " stand for the same fact. But the verb " to please " and the phrase " to be pleasant " are not equivalent in English. In the sense in which " X pleases me " is equivalent to " I desire X " it is not equivalent to " I find X pleasant ". If I decide to be martyred rather than to live in comfort at the expense of concealing my opinions, there is a sense in which martyrdom must " please me " more than living in comfort under these conditions. But it certainly does not follow *ex vi termini* that I believe that martyrdom will be " more pleasant " than a comfortable life of external conformity. I do not think that " pleasantness " can be defined, or even described unambiguously by reference to its relations to desire. But I think we can give a fairly satisfactory ostensive definition of it as that characteristic which is common to the experience of smelling

roses, of tasting chocolate, of requited affection, and so on, and which is opposed to the characteristic which is common to the experiences of smelling sulphuretted hydrogen, of hearing a squeaky slate-pencil, of being burnt, of unrequited affection, and so on. And it is certainly not self-evident that I can desire *only* experiences which have the characteristic thus ostensively defined.

I think that there is no doubt that Psychological Hedonism has been rendered plausible by another confusion. The experience of having a desire fulfilled is always *pro tanto* and for the moment pleasant. So, whenever I desire anything, I foresee that if I get it I shall have the pleasure of fulfilled desire. It is easy to slip from this into the view that my motive for desiring X is the pleasure of fulfilled desire which I foresee that I shall enjoy if I get X. It is clear that this will not do. I have no reason to anticipate the pleasure of fulfilled desire on getting X unless I already desire X itself. It is evident then that there must be *some* desires which are not for the pleasures of fulfilled desire. Let us call them " primary desires ", and the others " secondary ". Butler has abundantly shown that there must be some primary desires. But, as Sidgwick rightly points out, he has gone to extremes in the matter which are not logically justified. The fact that there must be primary desires is quite compatible with Psychological Hedonism, since it is quite compatible with the view that all primary desires are for primary pleasures, *i.e.*, for pleasures of taste, touch, smell, etc., as distinct from the pleasures of fulfilled desire. Still, introspection shows that this is not in fact so. The ordinary man at most times plainly desires quite directly to eat when he is hungry. In so doing he incidentally gets primary pleasures of taste

and the secondary pleasure of fulfilled desire. Eventually he may become a *gourmand*. He will then eat because he desires the pleasures of taste, and he may even make himself hungry in order to enjoy the pleasures of fulfilled desire.

There is a special form of Psychological Hedonism of which Locke is the main exponent. This holds that all desire can be reduced to the desire to remove pain or uneasiness. The one conative experience is aversion to present pain, not desire for future pleasure. The position is as follows. When I am said to desire some future state X this means that the contemplation by me of my non-possession of X is painful. I feel an aversion to this pain and try to remove it by trying to get X. Since in the case of some things the contemplation of my non-possession of them is painful, whilst in the case of others it is neutral or pleasant, the question would still have to be raised as to why there are these differences. Perhaps the theory under discussion should not be counted as a form of Psychological Hedonism unless it holds that my awareness of the absence of X is painful if and only if I believe that the possession of X would be pleasant. This is in fact Locke's view, though he adds the proviso that my uneasiness at the absence of X is not necessarily proportional to the pleasure which I believe I should get from the possession of X. We will therefore take the theory in this form.

As regards the first part of the theory Sidgwick points out that desire is not usually a painful experience, unless it be very intense and be continually frustrated. No doubt desire is an unrestful state, in the sense that it tends to make us change our present condition. It shares this characteristic with genuine pain. But the difference is profound. When I feel aversion to a present pain I simply try to get rid of it.

When I feel the unrest of desire for a certain object I do not simply try to get rid of the uneasiness; I try to get that particular object. I could often get rid of the feeling far more easily by diverting my attention from the object than by the tedious and uncertain process of trying to gain possession of it. As regards the second part of the theory, it seems plain on inspection that I may feel uneasiness at the absence of some contemplated object for other reasons than that I believe that the possession of it would be pleasant. I might feel uncomfortable at the fact that I am selfish, and desire to be less selfish, without for a moment believing that I should be happier if I were more unselfish.

The Psychological Hedonist, at this stage, has two more lines of defence: (*a*) He may say that we unwittingly desire things only in respect of their hedonic qualities, but that we deceive ourselves and think that we desire some things directly or in respect of other qualities. It is plain that this assertion cannot be proved; and, unless there be some positive reason to accept Psychological Hedonism, there is not the faintest reason to believe it. (*b*) He may say that our desires were originally determined wholly and solely by the hedonic qualities of objects; but that now, by association and other causes, we have come to desire certain things directly or for other reasons. The case of the miser who has come by association to desire money for itself, though he originally desired it only for its use, is commonly quoted in support of this view. Mill, in his *Utilitarianism*, deals with the disinterested love of virtue on these lines. Sidgwick makes the following important observations on this contention. In the first place it must be sharply distinguished from the doctrine that the original *causes* of all our desires

were previous pleasant and painful experiences. The question is what were the original *objects* and *motives* of desire, not what kind of previous experiences may have *produced* our present desires. Secondly, the important question for ethics is what we desire here and now, not what we may have desired in infancy or in that pre-natal state about which the Psycho-analysts, who appear to be as familiar with the inside of their mother's womb as with the back of their own hands, have so much to tell us. If Ethical Hedonism be the true doctrine of the good, it is no excuse for the miser or the disinterested lover of virtue that they were sound Utilitarians while they were still trailing clouds of glory behind them. Lastly, such observations as we can make on young children point in exactly the opposite direction. They seem to be much more liable to desire things directly and for no reason than grown people. No doubt, as we go further back it becomes harder to distinguish between self-regarding and other impulses. But there is no ground for identifying the vague matrix out of which both grow with one rather than with the other.

I think that we may accept Sidgwick's argument here, subject to one explanation. It may well be the case that what very young children desire is on the whole what will in fact give them immediate pleasure, and that what they shun is what will in fact give them immediate pain; though there are plenty of exceptions even to this. But there is no ground to suppose that they think of the former things as likely to be pleasant, and desire them *for that reason*; or that they think of the latter things as likely to be painful, and shun them *for that reason*. It is unlikely that they have the experience of desiring and shunning for a reason at all at the early stages. And, if this be so, their experiences

are irrelevant to Psychological Hedonism, which is essentially a theory about the reasons or motives of desire.

(2, 3) Psychological Hedonism is now refuted, and the confusions which have made it plausible have been cleared up. It remains to notice a few important general facts about the relations of pleasure and desire and of pain and aversion. (*a*) Just as we distinguished between the pleasure of fulfilled desire and other pleasures, such as the smell of roses, so we must distinguish between the pain of frustrated desire and other pains, such as being burnt. And just as there are secondary desires for the pleasures of fulfilled desire, so there are secondary aversions for the pain of frustrated desire. Secondary aversions presuppose the existence of primary aversions, and it is logically possible that all primary aversions might be directed to pains. But inspection shows that this is not in fact the case. (*b*) Among those pleasures which do not consist in the experience of fulfilled desire a distinction must be drawn between passive pleasures, such as the experience of smelling a rose, and the pleasures of pursuit. A great part of human happiness consists in the experience of pursuing some desired object and successfully overcoming difficulties in doing so. The relations of this kind of pleasure to desire are somewhat complicated. The pleasure of pursuit will not be enjoyed unless we start with at least some faint desire for the pursued end. But the intensity of the pleasure of pursuit may be out of all proportion to the initial intensity of the desire for the end. As the pursuit goes on the desire to attain the end grows in intensity, and so, if we attain it, we may have enjoyed not only the pleasure of pursuit but also the pleasure of fulfilling a desire which has become very strong. All these facts are illustrated by the playing

of games, and it is often prudent to try to create a desire for an end in order to enjoy the pleasures of pursuit. As Sidgwick points out, too great a concentration on the thought of the pleasure to be gained by pursuing an end will diminish the desire for the end and thus diminish the pleasure of pursuit. If you want to get most pleasure from pursuing X you will do best to try to forget that this is your object and to concentrate directly on aiming at X. This fact he calls " the Paradox of Hedonism."

It seems to me that the facts which we have been describing have a most important bearing on the question of Optimism and Pessimism. If this question be discussed, as it generally is, simply with regard to the prospects of human happiness or misery in this life, and account be taken only of passive pleasures and pains and the pleasures and pains of fulfilled or frustrated desire, it is difficult to justify anything but a most gloomy answer to it. But it is possible to take a much more cheerful view if we include, as we ought to do, the pleasures of pursuit. From a hedonistic standpoint, it seems to me that in human affairs the means generally have to justify the end ; that ends are inferior carrots dangled before our noses to make us exercise those activities from which we gain most of our pleasures ; and that the secret of a tolerably happy life may be summed up in a parody of Hegel's famous epigram about the Infinite End,* viz., " the attainment of the Infinite End just consists in preserving the illusion that there is an End to be attained."

(D) FREE-WILL AND DETERMINISM. Sidgwick discusses this topic in *Book I, Chap. V* of the *Methods of Ethics*. The general question can, I think, be stated as follows :

* *Die Vollführung des unendlichen Zwecks ist so nur die Täuschung aufzuheben, als ob er noch nicht vollführt sei.*

" Granted that a certain man at a certain moment did in fact deliberately choose the alternative X and deliberately reject the alternative Y, could the very same man have instead chosen Y and rejected X even though everything in his own past history and present dispositions and everything in the past history and present dispositions of the rest of the universe had been precisely as it in fact was ? " Ethics is interested mainly in a particular case of this general problem, viz., when the alternative X is wrong and the alternative Y is right. Granted that I did at a certain moment deliberately choose the wrong alternative and reject the right one, could I at that moment have instead chosen the right and rejected the wrong one, even though everything in my past history and present dispositions and in those of the rest of the universe had been precisely as it in fact was ?

Sidgwick confines himself to this special case of the more general problem. He mentions a number of empirical facts which seem to support determinism, but he deliberately refrains from going into the metaphysics of the question. In this, though rather reluctantly, I shall follow him. But this much I must say. Physical substances and events are so utterly different in kind from minds and mental events that, even if complete determinism were certainly true of the former, any argument by analogy to a like conclusion about the latter would be most unreliable. Again, the kind of causation which applies to mental events in general, and particularly to those mental events which are characteristic of the rational level, such as inference and deliberate choice, is so utterly unlike physical or even physiological causation, that it would be most dangerous to transfer any proposition which involves the latter to the former. No doubt apparent

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