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Sidgwick Proposal

(i) Henry Sidgwick does not think there is self-evidence in Common Sense Morality. Common Sense Morality refers to a system of moral rules that I, myself, and everyone else uses in our lives. This system is used to make a critique about the actions someone makes. In *The Methods of Ethics*, Sidgwick says that for the Common Sense Morality to be in scientific form (be self-evident) it must pass four conditions. Those are the following: (I) the terms of the proposition must be clear and concise, (II) the self-evidence of the proposition must be ascertained by careful reflection, (III) the propositions accepted as self-evident must be mutually consistent, and (IV) absence of peer disagreement.

Sidgwick argues that the maxims of Common Sense Morality can never satisfy all four conditions. For example, Sidgwick examines the duty a parent has to their children. A parent has the duty to first provide for their children before anyone else. Sidgwick finds a problem here. He believes it is not self-evident to provide for one’s own children than to others if their happiness equally depends on the parent’s actions. Even if rule I (terms of the proposition must be clear and concise) is satisfied, then neither rules IV and II can be satisfied.

(ii) My argument is that Sidgwick is rather harsh on the doctrine of Common Sense Morality. Sidgwick holds utilitarianism as the primary basic theory that solves everything. Therefore, he argues the four rules of Common Sense Morality are vague and so applying them requires something more basic, which for Sidgwick is utilitarianism. To Sidgwick, utilitarianism is self-evident because it meets the four requirements. I plan to examine Sidgwick’s view of utilitarianism and compare it dogmatic intuitionism, arguing that they both can meet the four conditions (like Ross would argue). And because dogmatic intuitionism has a strong connection to Common Sense Morality I argue that Sidgwick’s criticism of Common Sense Morality is unfair. After this, I will defend dogmatic intuitionism by arguing it can be fixed by: narrowing the strategy, cut all principles out, and not label it a moral code. Because the principles of dogmatic intuitionism can be fixed so can Common Sense Morality.

(iii) I am using David O. Brink’s *Common Sense and First Principles in Sidgwick’s Methods.* In Brink’s article he asks what a moral judgment is. This is, in my understanding something that tells us what to do. Bring agrees with Sidgwick on the point that Common Sense Morality is biased and poorly constructed. And using this as judgment is wrong. Brink talks about using first principles to test Common Sense Morality to form a better system of judgment. Brink offers better critique than Sidgwick on Common Sense Morality. I argue like Brink that Common Sense Morality can be fixed (like dogmatic intuitionism). Again, I only argue that Sidgwick is harsh in his criticism and this article helps me show that.

The second piece of secondary literature I am using is Janice Daurio’s dissertation: *The Role of the Distinction Between Method and Principle and the Place of Common Sense Morality in Henry Sidgwick’s “the Method of Ethics.”* Daurio disagrees with Sidgwick’s argument that Common-Sense Morality is a moral theory. She says further that it can link Egoist, Institutionist, and Utilitarian methods to the Utilitarian principle. She argues that Common Sense Morality is sufficient for agents who identify the good as Utilitarian’s do, as universal happiness. This article will help rebuttal Sidgwick’s argument that utilitarianism is a moral theory and Common Sense Morality is not.