MASSIMO REICHLIN
Università Vita-Salute San Raffaele
reichlin.massimo@hsr.it

ON THE IDEA OF A 'METHOD' IN MORAL PHILOSOPHY*

abstract

The paper discusses the two meanings that 'method' is often assumed to have in moral philosophy: the epistemic meaning, according to which a method is a procedure to reach moral knowledge, and the normative meaning, according to which it is a criterion of right and wrong in actions. The origin of these two, clearly connected meanings can be traced to Sidgwick's work The Methods of Ethics. *It is argued that Sidgwick's seminal idea of a "reflective equilibrium" is a valuable and lasting contribution to the debate on moral epistemology; however, Sidgwick's characterisation of the different normative options is biased against non consequentialist approaches by its concentration on "methods", rather than on theories and "ultimate reasons". This consequentialist bias still lingers in contemporary ethics.*

keywords

method, Sidgwick, reflective equilibrium, consequentialism, deontology

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1. *The Methods of Ethics* is the title of one of the most important works in the history of moral philosophy, written by Henry Sidgwick. The influence of this work is such that, when talking about 'method' in moral philosophy, reference is generally made to one of the two things that Sidgwick meant with that word. The two different but connected meanings, that unfortunately Sidgwick fails to clearly distinguish, are the following: On the one hand, 'method' stands for a procedure that must be followed in order to reach moral knowledge, or any surrogate for knowledge that can be offered in an expressivist context (Sugarman and Sulmasy, 2010); on the other hand, it refers to a normative criterion for reaching conclusions as to the rightness or wrongness of human conduct, or to the goodness or badness of some trait of character or state of affairs (Baron, Pettit and Slote, 1997). In the first meaning, the issue of method belongs with moral epistemology, in the second it is part of normative ethics.
In this paper I will argue: a) that what Sidgwick says on the epistemic side, in one of its possible interpretations, is basically sound and b) that what he says on the normative side, while important and influent, is open to relevant criticism, both in his identification of the options in the 'normative menu', and in the specific characterisation of the main adversary of what he calls 'the method of utilitarianism'. The limits of Sidgwick's treatment – I will eventually suggest – have had a huge impact on contemporary normative discussion.

2. Sidgwick famously distinguished three methods of ethics: egoistic hedonism, intuitionism, and universalistic hedonism or utilitarianism. These three – to which, according to Sidgwick, all other methods are reducible – are the names of three normative theories, or at least can be so conceived and are often in fact conceived. However, as already mentioned, the notion of a method also has an epistemic significance. In fact, following earlier representatives of the utilitarian tradition, such as John Stuart Mill, Sidgwick presents the two hedonistic methods as based on the empirical or a posteriori strategy of establishing specific moral conclusions by calculating consequences in terms of the pleasure produced, and the intuitional method as based on the a priori strategy of grasping fundamental normative axioms and deriving from them particular moral conclusions.
In Sidgwick's use, the two meanings are interrelated in a complex way, because the main result of his book is to show the substantial convergence or conciliation of intuitionism and utilitarianism, both at a normative and at an epistemic level. On the one hand, while 'dogmatic intuitionism' cannot receive a philosophical vindication, utilitarianism offers a philosophical systematization of the morality of common sense, inasmuch as the latter is "unconsciously

utilitarian"; on the other hand, Sidgwick's critique of the empiricist epistemology of earlier utilitarians leads him to ground utilitarianism in the really self-evident first principles he establishes, and thus to present it as nothing but "the final form into which intuitionism tends to pass, when the demand for really self-evident first principles is rigorously pressed" (Sidgwick, 1907, p. 388). In short, the upshot of Sidgwick's work is the convergence of utilitarianism and *philosophical* intuitionism. When in 1930 Charles Broad first noted the ambiguity of the term 'intuitionism' in Sidgwick's treatment (Broad, 1930, p. 206), and proposed to use Bentham's word 'deontology' to denote the normative system based on a priori principles, he was in a sense making a perfectly appropriate point; however, he was also somehow obscuring the intrinsic connection between the two elements which is a relevant feature of Sidgwick's view. Intuitionism is the normative view accepting standards of right and wrong that are based on a priori knowledge – and in the end, for all the remaining differences, the same holds for utilitarianism as well[1].

3.

I will be comparatively brief on the epistemic aspect of the discussion. The nature of Sidgwick's epistemic approach has been the object of a complex discussion, and I can't get very much into this scholarly debate in this context (Singer, 1974; Deigh, 2007; Skelton, 2010). However, it seems to me that Sidgwick was basically right in rejecting the empiricist method of his utilitarian predecessors, and in showing that normative thinking cannot proceed without making appeal to intuition at some point; for it is clear that fundamental ethical concepts, such as 'right' or 'ought', cannot be reduced to any physical or psychological facts, such as desiring or preferring. As Sidgwick says, moral judgments "cannot legitimately be interpreted as judgments respecting the present or future existence of human feelings or any facts of the sensible world" (Sidgwick, 1907, p. 25). Moreover, Sidgwick was also unconditionally right in claiming that moral philosophy must take its start from reviewing the ordinary moral convictions of humanity, and then move forward by attempting to extract from them some principles or axioms that can help remove inconsistencies and systematize the sometimes chaotic beliefs of common sense. In fact, it is far more likely that we stumble into some true moral principle by starting from our ordinary experience of what it is to be under a moral obligation than by applying our rational tools to moral thinking conceived of in a practical vacuum.

Of course, Sidgwick declared that moral philosophy must do more than simply reformulate common moral beliefs: it must transcend common sense in order to tell human beings what they ought to think, instead of merely clarifying what they already think. However, a) Sidgwick clearly grants some initial authority to the rules of common sense. In fact, he views the "current rules" as constraining the work of philosophical intuitionism, since the self-evident moral principles must be such that those rules can be deduced from them, "either just as they are commonly received or with slight modifications and rectifications" (Sidgwick, 1907, p. 102); b) he accepts that "the truth of a philosopher's premises will always be tested by the acceptability of his conclusions: if in any important point he be found in flagrant conflict with common opinion, his method is likely to be declared invalid" (Sidgwick, 1907, p. 373); c) he declares that his fundamental axioms of Justice, Prudence and Benevolence are themselves part of that morality of common sense, along with other principles whose self-evidence is illusory; d) he declares that the fact that it sustains the general validity of current moral

1 At one point Sidgwick calls the normative view that excludes the consideration of consequences "the narrower sense" of 'intuitional', distinguishing it from the "the wider sense", that indicates the epistemic view affirming self-evident normative principles (Sidgwick, 1996, p. 102).

judgments is part of the "proof" of utilitarianism.
The method here presupposed is, therefore, a complex blending of foundationalist and coherentist elements (Brink, 1994; Phillips, 2011, pp. 65-76): philosophical ethics takes its start from common morality, transcends it by establishing the axioms that correct and systematize the rules of common sense, but then, in the last resort, is tested against common beliefs; "a certain divergence from Common Sense" (Sidgwick, 1907, p. 373) is allowed in the conclusions, but the subversion of ordinary moral thinking would be epistemically suspect. This method does show some similarity with contemporary proposals of "wide reflective equilibrium" (Daniels, 1979; Scanlon, 2014), even though the discussion is open on this point. In any case, while moral philosophy cannot simply reiterate and perhaps systematize what may in fact turn out to be our sheer prejudices, it cannot aim at rebuilding our moral system *ex novo*, either on the basis of conceptual or linguistic intuitions concerning the notions of morality or rationality. Some commentators have claimed that Sidgwick should be regarded as "a modest [*i.e.* not dogmatic] foundationalist" (de Lazari-Radek and Singer, 2014, p. 111), and that this position is not far from those conceptions of wide reflective equilibrium, such as Daniels' or Scanlon's, that allow for the (fallible) recognition of objective moral truths, and do not confine the goal of the moral enterprise to the search for intersubjectively constructed moral principles. This may be right, but still, to say that, at the end of the inquiry, "we will be able to demonstrate that none, or virtually none, of our existing moral judgments are credible" (de Lazari-Radek and Singer, 2014, p. 113) misinterprets Sidgwick's epistemic approach, and strikes me as highly implausible and perhaps impossible. It is one thing to say that no single judgment is excluded from possible revision; quite another to say that *all* our present beliefs may be wrong or false. In fact, we construct our moral judgments, such as the one that we ought to maximise overall welfare or to give to each his or her due, starting from ordinary beliefs, such as that pleasure is good or that each person has equal worth. We can surely test any such ordinary belief against others, and perhaps discard some of them as inconsistent with our whole body of beliefs; however, should we declare all our ordinary beliefs incredible, we would simply lack any place where to start from in order to construct the judgments and principles of our moral theory. In so far as his moral epistemology was hybrid between foundationalism and coherentism, I assume that this is also what Sidgwick would say, and, therefore, that he would dismiss the attempt to reject all our current judgments and "replace them with the judgments that follow from the [soundest] moral theory" (de Lazari-Radek and Singer, 2014, p. 113).
An a posteriori confirmation of this claim is the fact that attempts to ground straightforwardly foundationalist systems of morality bracketing all substantive beliefs, such as those embarked on by Richard Hare or Richard Brandt, have been shown to presuppose at some point substantive (and possibly non universally valid) moral intuitions[2]; in general, any 'foundationalist' definition of the space of morals, presuming to bring out criteria of normative judgment without presupposing any particular moral beliefs, inevitably smuggles in some moral content, which is taken for granted as a substitute of full-blown moral intuitions. So, as far as the epistemic dimension of 'method' is concerned, it seems to me that there is nothing better that we can do than, in Sidgwick's wake, to embark on a phenomenology of our moral experience, and try to extract from it some more general principles which we can use to partly correct or refine our beliefs with a view to making them more consistent and systematically connected. This is not to say, of course, that Sidgwick was right, either in precisely stating the really self-evident axioms of ethics, or in the consequentialist-friendly interpretation he

2 For comments on Hare's project, in particular, see Mackie, 1977.

gave of them; nor does this mean that he was charitable and fair in his critique of attempts to systematise the rules of common sense morality within a non-consequentialist framework (Shaver, 2014; Hurka, 2014; Phillips, 2011, p. 100-3). But this is already part of the normative issue.

4.

Sidgwick talked of egoism, intuitionism and utilitarianism as different 'methods' of ethics; and it could be objected that talk of different ethical 'theories' might have been much clearer and more appropriate. However, contrary to what it is sometimes implied, the three methods discussed by Sidgwick are *not* ethical theories. As a matter of fact, Sidgwick himself defines a method as "any rational procedure by which we determine what individual human beings 'ought' – or what it is 'right' for them – to do, or to seek to realise by voluntary action" (Sidgwick, 1907, p. 1). This is not exactly the same as a philosophical theory, for, in Sidgwick's use, the latter would involve systematically justifying one procedure as *the* one and only right method, or demonstrating the final harmonization of the different methods, and providing a complete solution of the chief ethical difficulties and controversies (Sidgwick, 1907, p. 13). Moreover, in Sidgwick's view, an ethical theory does also encompass the establishment of ethical first principles, that is, a statement and justification of the ultimate reason for action. He clearly distinguishes method from principle (Sidgwick, 1907, p. 85), when he writes that the view requiring to follow the non-utilitarian rules of common sense in order to promote general happiness rejects the *method* of utilitarianism, but not its *principle*; and he clearly says that it is not his "primary aim to establish such principles" (Sidgwick, 1907, p. 14), but to focus on the methods used by common sense (Schneewind, 1977, pp. 191-3).
Sidgwick's basic purpose – at least in his official declarations – is therefore not to establish or defend an ethical theory. His declared aim is only to diminish the confusion that he finds apparent in ordinary ethical thinking, which uses a variety of methods, without being aware of their partial clash or of the fact that inconsistent principles are used at different times. He just wants to "expound as clearly and as fully as my limits will allow the different methods of ethics that I find implicit in our common moral reasoning; to point out their mutual relations, and, where they seem to conflict, to define the issue as much as possible" (Sidgwick, 1907, p. 14). In particular, his main goal is to critically discuss the morality of common sense, and to reject "the attempt to elevate it into a system of Intuitional Ethics" (Sidgwick, 1907, p. 361); he does not want to provide a systematic foundation or complete discussion of utilitarian ethical theory, following his initial declaration according to which his volume "contains neither the exposition of a system, nor a natural or critical history of systems" (Sidgwick, 1907, p. 12; cf. 78). From this point of view, Sidgwick's attitude is modest and cautious; nonetheless, it is also ambitious in aiming at the identification of *the* fundamental alternatives among which humans *must* choose when trying to establish the reasonableness of their conduct and to reach a systematic account of morality. And we must investigate whether the alternatives are appropriately defined and adequately reflect ordinary moral experience.

5.

My main claim, as far as the normative side of the discussion is concerned, is that the way in which Sidgwick treats the relationship between methods and principles has several unhappy consequences. First, it leads him to unduly limit the options in the 'ethical menu'; second, it limits his exploration of non-consequentialist views to the systems of rational intuitionists, such as Whewell – and even in this case, without appropriately rendering justice to them[3]; third, it implicitly reduces all other plausible rivals of utilitarianism to this pattern. As a

3 On Sidgwick's uncharitable treatment of Whewell, see Cremaschi, 2008 and 2011.

consequence, the legacy that *The Methods* left to the twentieth-century ethical debate is a blunt and unsatisfactory alternative between a seriously undermined form of pluralistic rational intuitionism and an admittedly sophisticated form of utilitarianism; an alternative from which contemporary ethical theory still struggles to be released. Roger Crisp is right, in other words, in claiming that "his emphasis on method over principle can lead to philosophical distortion" and that Sidgwick's book would have gained clarity by centering on *The Ultimate Principles of Ethics* (Crisp, 2015a, pp. 21-2).

The fundamental move that Sidgwick makes in *Methods*, I.1.4 is to derive his three methods from the review of what he considers the two ultimate ends that are "strongly and widely supported" (Sidgwick, 1907, p. 9) by the common sense of mankind, namely, happiness and perfection: the first generates the two hedonistic methods, while the latter is connected to the intuitional method as "a special form" of it. It is surprising, in an otherwise scrupulous writer as Sidgwick, to see that this connection is pretty much assumed without argument[4]: from the few lines that he devotes to this point, we get the idea that respecting the intuitional duties of common sense morality is the means to reach the complete realisation of virtue, which in turn is "the most valuable element of human Excellence" (Sidgwick, 1907, p. 11). As noted by two contemporary admirers, this seems to mean that "In obeying these rules, we achieve the goal of our own moral perfection or excellence" (de Lazari-Radek and Singer, 2014, p. 16). This interpretation is confirmed by the following observation: "If a man accepts any end as ultimate and paramount, he accepts implicitly as his 'method of ethics' whatever process of reasoning enables him to determine the actions most conducive to this end" (Sidgwick, 1907, p. 8). The connection so established between the respect of intuitional rules and the end of perfection, therefore, seems to imply that respecting such rules is rational so long as it produces the desired end of moral virtue. In this way, however, a teleological account is presupposed, and an implicit stress on maximisation is also introduced: in fact, according to Sidgwick, the "natural methods rationalised" (Sidgwick, 1907, p. 12) are those indicating the actions *most* conducive to a certain end.

A few comments are here in order. For one thing, it is not clear that respecting those duties is sufficient, or sometimes even strictly necessary, to achieve human perfection. In fact, it is part of common sense to say that human perfection sometimes requires supererogatory action, which goes beyond the accomplishment of standard duties. In the second place, it is also unclear that morality is in itself sufficient for human perfection, which may include intellectual, artistic and other capacities well beyond rule-abidance. Thirdly, linking the intuitional method to the end of perfection does not seem to do justice to the distinction, accepted by Sidgwick himself (Sidgwick, 1907, I.1.2.), between the views of ethics as the search for the rational precepts of conduct, and as the inquiry into the nature of the ultimate good of human life. The first account presupposes that the rightness of conduct does not necessarily depend on its conducing to some end, for it can also be inherent in the action itself: for example, talking in contemporary terms, some conduct may be made inherently right by the fact that it expresses acknowledgment of some fundamental right of other people, even though it does not foster anyone's perfection, or other desired end. It is a fact, however, that, starting from its very first presentation, the "intuitional method" is always linked by Sidgwick to the search for a goal, albeit one different from happiness. Fourthly, establishing the connection in this way also seems to exclude the possibility to connect the ultimate goal

4 This perhaps being an example of what Thomas Hurka has called a general truth, i.e., that "the more important a topic is, the less time Sidgwick spent on it, and what he said about it was then often far from clear" (Hurka, 2014, p. 151).

of Perfection with a different method, for example the one based on the exemplary power of embodied virtue. This has the unhappy consequence of excluding from consideration Aristotelian virtue ethics and of juxtaposing it to Clarke's or Price's strictly 'deontological' systems as members of the same 'philosophical family'.
On the whole, the notion of a 'method', as presented in Sidgwick's work, seems compromised from the start with a teleological view, according to which the general feature of a normative criterion is to foster the accomplishment of some specified goal. Sidgwick does not accept that 'right' *means* 'conducive to a desired end' (Sidgwick, 1907, pp. 25-7) – as Moore will do in the *Principia* – but he sees moral value as a goal that can be produced, and therefore equates 'rightness' and 'rational conduct' with conduciveness to a rationally approved end. Since the rules of the "intuitional method" are basically conceived as means to the end of perfection, this method is not understood as having a quite different point from the teleological one, but as a sort of partial deviation from the archetype.

6.

This conclusion may seem too hasty, for at *Methods*, I.6.1 Sidgwick speaks of three different "ultimate reasons for acting or abstaining" (Sidgwick, 1907, p. 78): happiness, excellence or perfection, and duty. He declares that duty, not perfection, is the ultimate reason to which the intuitional rules refer; moreover, later in that chapter, he also observes that "almost any method may be connected with almost any ultimate reason by means of some – often plausible – assumption" (Sidgwick, 1907, p. 83). Therefore, Sidgwick's view seems to be that the intuitional method can be linked to two different ultimate goods, namely, perfection and the accomplishment of duty. And assuming, as he does, the priority of method over ultimate reason justifies his treating perfectionism as a variety of intuitionism. This would show both that Sidgwick is not presupposing a teleological account of rightness and that he was in fact justified in not acknowledging perfectionism as a distinct account.
There are reasons, however, to be sceptical of this conclusion. The first reason concerns perfectionism. While it is true that following intuitional rules of unconditional duty can be a way to pursue moral virtue, it seems that perfectionism is better conceived of as a non-hedonist and non-consequentialist form of teleology: that is, as a form of moral thinking affirming the centrality of expressing certain attitudes, as typically displayed by virtuous agents[5]. This is not necessarily equivalent to respecting unconditional rules of morality. In fact, according to this theory, acting rightly has more to do with expressing certain traits of character in our relationships with others than with observing rules — which also means that very often there will be more than one possibility of acting rightly, contrary to what Sidgwick assumes. Moreover, in contrast to a strictly deontological moral outlook, theories based on character assume that being a virtuous agent is also, not irrelevantly, to know when a rule should be broken or suspended. Finally, as already mentioned, these theories insist that seeking perfection can often involve going beyond the call of duty. A second reason for scepticism concerns the introduction of duty as an ultimate reason parallel to happiness and perfection, a move that seems insufficient to account for the reasonableness of the intuitional method. For one thing, this strategy presents the notion of duty as self-standing, that is, as something in itself justifying: and this claim is difficult to justify outside a specifically Kantian framework. Moreover, assuming duty as the ultimate ground of action is too unspecific to characterise the intuitional method: also in the utilitarian system, in fact, we can fairly say that doing what maximises happiness is a duty. However, in this case duty

5 I am not convinced, on this point, by Crisp's arguments as to the reducibility of virtue ethics to non-principle-based deontology, as far as the notion of right and wrong action is concerned: see Crisp, 2015b.

can be further explained with reference to the idea of happiness, just as, in a perfectionist view, the promotion of perfection can be offered as the ultimate reason for accomplishing duties. However, in the case of intuitionism, reference to duty as the ultimate reason of the intuitional method leads to the uninspiring and almost tautological view according to which, as commented by Crisp "the reason I should keep my promise [...] is that promises should be kept" (Crisp, 2015a, p. 26). So, even though the intuitional method does not treat moral rules as means to the end of moral virtue, the ultimate reason why we should follow those rules is in no way truly explained.

This strengthens the conclusion according to which a major shortcoming of Sidgwick's enterprise is to have limited the discussion to the methods, without extending it to ethical principles and theories; for to rationalise conduct is not only to provide a method for reaching practical conclusions, but also to provide an ultimate reason to follow that method. Discussing the intuitional systems, Sidgwick does not provide any such reason, but the mere idea of duty; this is why inscribing the rules of the morality of common sense into the utilitarian framework, with its insistence on the ultimate good of happiness, seems to provide the needed rationale for following them (so long as they foster the accomplishment of that end). But Sidgwick fails to see that the intuitional method can also be inscribed in a different overall scheme, providing a different ultimate reason to follow the ordinary rules. And the search for this alternative rationale for what was later termed a 'deontological' view of ethics has often eluded ensuing commentators, so that the ordinary rules of morality have appeared, in Sidgwick's words, as "an accidental aggregate of precepts, which stands in need of some rational synthesis" (Sidgwick, 1907, p. 102), or, in McNaughton's phrase, as "an unconnected heap of duties" (McNaughton, 1996).

7. The influence of Sidgwick's book on twentieth-century ethics has been much deeper than that of any other writer, including Mill and Moore. But his insistence on methods over principles, and his failure to explore several other possibilities in ethical theory have been damaging for the ensuing discussion. Leaving aside egoism, Sidgwick's dichotomy between the two methods – a dichotomy, of course, which he presumed to have resolved – was later on accepted as *the* basic dichotomy between ethical theories; and the whole point of normative ethics has often been whether to accept some form of utilitarianism or some version of rational intuitionism, most notably in Ross' version. It was in the context of discussing Sidgwick's view, in fact, that Charles Broad introduced the notion of deontology to characterise the normative element of the 'intuitional method'. And, as it has been noted by several commentators (Louden, 1996; Shaver, 2011; Sørensen, 2008; Timmermann, 2015), Sidgwick's treatment of deontology as a sort of deviation from the ordinary 'teleological' conception – a deviation with an inbuilt slight look of irrationality – exerted a relevant influence in the formation of the notion. Suffice it to recall that, in introducing the distinction between teleology and deontology, Broad writes that, while the teleologist deems arbitrary to exclude any part of its foreseen consequences, the deontologist assumes that the rightness or wrongness of an action is "completely determined by certain characteristics of a certain restricted part of its total intended consequences" (Broad, 1930, p. 212). So, what is specific about deontology turns out to be the (somewhat arbitrary) decision to exclude from consideration the many more remote consequences that an act may have, and to concentrate on its immediate consequences, indeed on that restricted part of its immediate consequences which bear on the definition of the act: thus, according to Broad, deontology "defines the kind of action under consideration by *one or a few* characteristics of its *immediate* consequences; and it claims to see that these *suffice* to make all such actions right (or wrong), and that the more remote consequences and the other characteristics of the consequences will always be irrelevant to the rightness (or wrongness)

of the action" (Broad, 1930, p. 214)[6].
It is apparent that Broad's notion of deontology is styled on Sidgwick's characterisation of the intuitional method as a departure from the 'basic' teleological account. And Broad even adds that, while a monistic deontology is a theoretical possibility, in fact deontological theories have tended to be pluralistic; the suggestion being, not even implicitly, that deontological theories lack any principle of unification of their several duties, and that this is a reason of weakness, as compared to teleological ones. In fact, "No one has produced a plausible monistic deontological theory; whilst universalistic hedonism is a fairly plausible form of monistic teleological theory. And this fact has often made people prefer teleological theories, since monism in such matters is more satisfactory to the intellect than pluralism" (Broad, 1930, p. 215).

8.

Sidgwick's discussion of moral epistemology has provided twentieth-century ethics with a viable and fruitful method for reflecting on morals and gaining moral knowledge. But the translation of Sidgwick's discussion on 'methods' into the present discussion on ethical theories has caused an overemphasis on judgments of rightness and wrongness in contemporary normative theory, and the standardisation of a conception of right action as 'the best, or most reasonable, thing to do' or 'the act achieving the most possible value'. This conception obviously leads to the so called 'paradox of deontology' and biases the discussion in favour of consequentialism.
In order to retrieve a plausible view of deontology – or any other label one wishes to attach to a normative theory departing from consequentialism – it is vital not to concentrate on 'methods', but on theories, and particularly on what Sidgwick called "ultimate reasons" for moral action. If ethics mainly has to do with causing effects in the world, trying to make it a better place, than consequentialism is the most plausible candidate to the role of the best theory. A sensible non-consequentialist view must start from a different general account, according to which ethics has to do with committing oneself to reflectively endorsed principles, through which we define our relationships with others. In such an account, the notions of moral integrity, self-respect and respect for others will be prominent, and the focus will not be on the method for reaching specific normative conclusions, but on the cultivation of a character based on a continuous review of one's intentions and reasons for action and a consistent application of appropriate moral principles. The accomplishment of this task, however, is, for a large part, still waiting to be carried out.

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6 Something very similar was in fact already present in Sidgwick's definition of intuitionism as the view that "certain kinds of actions are right or reasonable in themselves, apart from their consequences; – or rather with a merely partial consideration of consequences, from which other consequences admitted to be possibly good or bad are definitely excluded" (Sidgwick, 1907, p. 200; cf. 337).

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