The *Methods* of J. B. Schneewind

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J. B. Schneewind's *Sidgwick's Ethics and Victorian Moral Philosophy* was the single best philosophical commentary on Henry Sidgwick's *Methods of Ethics* produced in the twentieth century. Although Schneewind was primarily concerned to read Sidgwick's ethical theory in its historical context, as reflecting the controversies generated by such figures as J. S. Mill, F. D. Maurice, and William Whewell, his reading also ended up being highly neo-Kantian, reflecting various Rawlsian priorities. As valuable as such an interpretation of Sidgwick surely is, Schneewind's approach has always been in some key respects too narrowly conceived in its construction of Sidgwick's philosophical and cultural context, failing to grapple with such troubling, philosophically relevant issues as the possible racism of Sidgwick's ethical and political views, or the sexual politics manifest in his collaboration with such figures as John Addington Symonds.

I

If there is anyone to whom I might apply that famous Davidsonian dedication, 'Without Whom, Not', it would be Jerry Schneewind, whom I first got to know some sixteen years ago when, out of the clear blue sky, I called him up to ask if he would contribute an essay to my planned collection, *Essays on Henry Sidgwick*.[1] Then, as now, he was the acknowledged dean of Sidgwick studies, with his 1977 work *Sidgwick's Ethics and Victorian Moral Philosophy*, having set the standard for all serious historical and philosophical work on Sidgwick.[2] Then, as now, he demonstrated an unfailing generosity and supportiveness when it came to encouraging the work of younger scholars struggling to follow his lead, even such undistinguished ones as myself. Indeed, in my experience, he has often seemed more Sidgwickian than Sidgwick in welcoming new research that criticizes and goes beyond his own – a very rare feat. Consequently, even when my own work might seem most distant from and critical of Jerry's 'ideas in context' approach to the history of philosophy in general and Sidgwick in particular, it has in truth been profoundly in his debt. I stress this advisedly, since the remarks that follow may suggest a considerable critical distance from Jerry's reading of Sidgwick. And if they are wrong, I want to reserve the option of blaming him.

Now, I should add that he did not actually agree to write a new essay for my collection. I was surprised to learn, from the dean of Sidgwick studies, that he had sworn off of work on Sidgwick, and had

[1] *Essays on Henry Sidgwick* (New York, 1992).
[2] *Sidgwick's Ethics and Victorian Moral Philosophy* (Oxford, 1977).

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no plans ever to write anything on him again. (Indeed, in due course, he would go so far as to send me a big box containing all of his Sidgwick research materials.[3]) He would advise, read and criticize, but his own guiding star was now Kant and the pre-Kantian history of the notion of autonomy. I was always somewhat baffled by his adamance on this count, and my bafflement was enhanced rather than diminished by the 'Foreword' to my collection that I suppose I rather guilt-tripped him into writing. There, by way of comment on the comparative thinness of critical historical work on Sidgwick, he wrote that Sidgwick

> has generally made his meaning so evident that we can usually engage with him, take from him, controvert him, or go on from him without the kind of critical apparatus and painstaking exegesis called for by philosophers who are more remote historically or who failed to present clearly a position as consistent as Sidgwick's.

Sidgwick, he explained, 'has never wholly dropped out of our philosophical conversation', and these facts explain why it is both less surprising and less bothersome that Sidgwick studies have never rivalled, say, Hume studies.[4]

To my mind, such remarks sounded more like Parfit than Schneewind, who after all had devoted a largish and excellent book to demonstrating precisely how misleading it can be to think of Sidgwick as a slightly senior contemporary. Sidgwick, as *Sidgwick's Ethics and Victorian Moral Philosophy* very rightly insisted, was philosophically moulded by an extraordinary constellation of forces, including the work – and personal influence of – William Whewell, F. D. Maurice, John Grote and other now all but forgotten intuitionist predecessors of British Idealism. The significance of such authors scarcely figured in the going 'philosophical conversation' to which Jerry was referring. Even Rawls, who, next to Schneewind and Parfit, probably did more to revive interest in Sidgwick than anyone else in the later twentieth century, had rather clearly failed, in his earlier *A Theory of Justice* period, to recognize and properly situate the complex nature of Sidgwick's intuitionist moral epistemology. What, then, was Jerry suggesting, in his Foreword? Had he come to think that, for all his efforts to reconstruct the views of the 'Cambridge Moralists' and their role in the growth of utilitarianism and the genesis of Sidgwick's *Methods of Ethics*, his first big book was somehow beneath what a serious historian of philosophy should aspire to? I hoped not, but I had the uneasy feeling that I might be destined forever to play a difficult

[3] A treasure trove of his early research and correspondence, which saved me a great deal of work in tracking down possible archival resources.

[4] *Essays on Henry Sidgwick*, p. ix.

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role, that of singing the praises of Jerry's earlier and more Victorian self. This was the self that, at a time when academic philosophy in the United States was still quite suspicious of 'philosophers' doing the history of philosophy at all, had spent years luxuriating in rich interdisciplinary studies of not just Victorian philosophy, in some narrow (anachronistic) sense, but of Victorian literature, poetry and theology. He had been expanding the horizons of academic philosophy in all these rich Rortyean ways even before Rorty himself had understood his own role in redirecting the philosophical current. Recall some of his early efforts, say, the entry on George Eliot contributed to the Edwards *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, or the 1970 book *Backgrounds of English Victorian Literature*. Recall, too, this early remark, so evocative of Sidgwick, whom Eliot much admired: 'She [Eliot] frequently traced the career of an unusually sensitive and intelligent person who hopes to do great things for others but after painful defeats ends by settling into a life of unheroic and routine benevolence.' Schneewind was right to stress the philosophical importance of such literary connections as that between Sidgwick and Eliot, or Sidgwick and the poets Clough and Tennyson. Can it be claimed that *The Invention of Autonomy*, for all its grandeur in tracing the Kantian essence back to everyone from Pufendorf to Montaigne, actually represents that same range and sweep of the early Schneewind, who was apt to launch into a discussion of Eliot, Clough and Tennyson when fixing Sidgwick's context? Have Jerry's literary and theological interests receded over the course of his life as an academic philosopher?

II

Now, having suggested how in some respects Schneewind's earlier big book was more wide-ranging than his later big book, it must be allowed that there is also an obvious way in which his research on Sidgwick was narrowly defined, and unfortunately so. Like most philosophers with an interest in Sidgwick, he trained his attention on Sidgwick's masterpiece, *The Methods of Ethics*, paying scant attention to his views in political theory and political economy. This in itself is curious, since Sidgwick is so often taken to be the most philosophically sophisticated of the classical utilitarians, and the classical utilitarians are often taken to be the supreme exemplars of comprehensive ethical-political theory. Sidgwick was no exception. During his lifetime, when academic professionalism was becoming all the rage, he was regarded as in equal parts a professional philosopher, a professional economist, and a professional political scientist, not to mention a professional parapsychologist. Yet Schneewind's *Sidgwick's Ethics* was concerned primarily with the *Methods* and secondarily with such other works

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as directly overlapped with the *Methods* in an all too obvious way, chiefly the *Outlines of the History of Ethics*, the posthumous *Lectures on the Ethics of Green, Spencer, and Martineau*, and various essays. There is hardly any mention even of Sidgwick's practical ethics and casuistry (for example, the essays in his *Practical Ethics*), and his parapsychology, politics and political economy are only glancingly dealt with.

To my mind, this focus, although fruitful in producing much detailed analysis of the *Methods*, also helped keep the early Schneewind from raising some of the most troubling questions that can be raised about Sidgwick's philosophical ethics and politics. The Sidgwick that emerges in *Sidgwick's Ethics* is a very Rawlsian, even a very Kantian Sidgwick. I can best explicate this by doing something that both Schneewind's past and present selves very much dislike – namely, giving you some chunky quotations from *Sidgwick's Ethics*. Consider this passage, which summarizes better than any reviewer just what reading was on offer in the book:

> Like many great philosophical ideas, his basic thought is at once simple in itself and complex in its bearings. Reason, for him, is simply the common human ability to obtain truths which everyone ought to accept and which are connected through the unique relationship of 'being a reason for' in structures containing propositions of greater and lesser generality. The constraints under which reason must operate in guiding action can be summarized in two uncontroversial assertions. First, each person is a rational and sentient being with an identity persisting over time who can to some extent control his own actions by the conclusions to which his reason leads him. Second, there are a multiplicity of such beings affecting one another. The starting-point of Sidgwick's argument is the demonstration, through reasoning and appeal to introspection, that we have a unique, irreducible concept of 'being a reason for' as it applies to action and to desire. From this concept we learn that our own ability to reason involves a unique kind of demand on both the active and the sentient aspects of our nature, the demand that our acts and desires be reasonable. Since, therefore, it must be possible to give reasons for our desires and actions, a complex argument involving the elimination of various principles which might serve as the ultimate determinant of such reasons leads to the conclusion that a maximizing consequentialist principle must be the most basic principle of rationality in practice. Further eliminative argument shows that the end set for us by this principle must be interpreted hedonistically. These arguments bring out what the essence of rationality in practice is, given the facts of human existence. Further argument shows that it is possible to embody this rationality in daily life through a code like that exemplified in ordinary moral belief. At least it is possible up to a point. In addition to problems of detail in working out a perfectly rational code, there is a problem of principle. The two propositions stating the constraints under which reason must be practical indicate that guidance is needed for beings of a dual nature. Each of us is, first, the possessor of a private consciousness and, next, a member of a community of interacting possessors of such consciousnesses. There are reasonable requirements for the possessor of the private consciousness, and

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there are reasonable requirements for the interacting conscious agents. But they do not coincide. This forces Sidgwick to the unhappy conclusion that the best that reason can do in coping with the actuality of human nature in the world as it exists, is to impose demands which in the end are incompatible. Sidgwick's conclusion is that the problem his historical analysis leads him to take as central to modern ethics cannot be fully resolved.[5]

This beautiful passage brings out the many strong points of Schneewind's reading, his sensitive exploration of all the ways in which Sidgwick represents a distinctively modern perspective but actually departs from the utilitarianism of Bentham and Mill, what with his commitment to reason and, moreover, the conflicts of reason. For Sidgwick, there was a dualism of practical reason, a potential conflict between the moral point of view and the personal point of view that only some form of theistic postulate about the moral harmony of the universe could plausibly resolve. Sidgwick was a determinist, but not a psychological egoist, a hedonist (albeit of a very undogmatic stripe), but not in any unqualified sense a utilitarian, though he did appropriate that term. His was a dual source view of practical reason, and what he really wanted, what he spent endless hours searching for with his parapsychological research, was evidence that the moral universe might be such that there was some harmonization of the two perspectives. In effect, Sidgwick took up the sceptical challenge common to Hobbes and Hume – namely, that God and ghosts go together, as articles of belief. Evidence for the afterlife would be at least a small step towards theism. *Sidgwick's Ethics* does go that far, in clarifying the connection between Sidgwick's ethics and his parapsychology, though alas, that is as far as it goes.

Now, as the very next passages of *Sidgwick's Ethics* suggest, the Schneewind of *The Invention of Autonomy* was not altogether absent from this earlier effort. After some comments on Sidgwick's debt to Bishop Butler, the text continues:

It is tempting to describe the dominant philosophical strategy which Sidgwick uses to carry out this task as a Kantian attempt to work out the sole conditions under which reason can be practical. Certainly his basic aim is similar to Kant's, but, as his many points of disagreement with Kant suggest, the Kantian aspect of his thinking needs to be defined with some care. He detaches the issue of how reason can be practical from the most distinctive aspects of Kantianism. He rejects the methodological apparatus of the 'critical philosophy', the Kantian distinction of noumenal and phenomenal standpoints, and the association of the issue with the problem of free will. He treats the question of the possibility of rationally motivated action as answerable largely in terms of commonplace facts; he does not attribute any special synthesizing powers to reason beyond those assumed in ordinary logic; and he does not take morality to provide us

[5] *Sidgwick's Ethics*, pp. 417–18.

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with support for religious beliefs. In refusing to base morality on pure reason alone, moreover, he moves decisively away from Kant, as is shown by his very un-Kantian hedonistic and teleological conclusions. These points make it clear that the Kantian strain in Sidgwick's thought is most marked in his central idea about the rationality of first principles. Substantive first principles of morality are not the most basic embodiment of practical rationality. The rationality of these principles is a consequence of requirements set by more formal principles which themselves delineate the general activity of reasoning, when the formal principles are applied in the circumstances of human life. Intuition is then explicable as the understanding a reasonable being has of the nature of his own activity as reasonable. If this is Kantianism, then it is not inaccurate to think of Sidgwick as a Kantian. For this is the basic thought which enables Sidgwick to reshape the issues of ethics as they reached him through his British predecessors.[6]

Admittedly, some will find this a little strained – a deterministic, hedonistic, and dualistic Kantianism? But I think that, on the contrary, this is characteristic of just how remarkable Schneewind is at seeing the larger filiations weaving through the thickets of historical contexts. For Sidgwick was indeed *profoundly* influenced by Kant, whom he acknowledged as one of his masters. Indeed, he was more profoundly influenced by Kant than even the Schneewind of *Sidgwick's Ethics* recognized. In a letter to his close friend Roden Noel, a letter to which the early Schneewind did not have access, Sidgwick explained:

I have never based my belief in immortality on our consciousness of the oneness of Self. I have always considered Kant's 'Paralogisms' conclusive as against that.

What I really base it on (apart from the evidence supplied by Spiritualism, and apart from religious grounds) is on *Ethics*, as Kant, supported by Common Sense. But I do not state the argument quite as you answer it: but thus.

In face of the conflict between Virtue & Happiness, my own voluntary (?) life, and that of every other man constituted like me, i.e., I believe, of every normal man, is reduced to hopeless anarchy.

Two authorities (roughly speaking Butler's 'self-love' and 'Conscience') claim to rule, and neither will yield to the other.

The only way of avoiding this intolerable anarchy is by the Postulate of Immortality.

But you may say – 'you cannot believe it because you want to'.

I reply: I find

1) in me an inherited predisposition to this faith.
2) In human history the belief is that of the best part of mankind: it has nearly, though not quite, the authority of a belief of Common Sense.[7]

This remarkable letter, dated 3 January 1870 – which is to say, from a time when Sidgwick was actively at work completing the

[6] Ibid., pp. 419–20.

[7] This letter is reproduced in full in my *Henry Sidgwick: Eye of the Universe* (New York, 2004).

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Methods – shows that at least at some points Sidgwick was very much attracted to what he took to be a Kantian resolution of the dualism of practical reason, on which, in some complicated fashion, morality does provide support for religious belief. Admittedly, he wanted further buttressing from psychical research, and as time wore on he in fact grew less Kantian and more parapsychological, along the lines just noted. But for all that, he always thought that Kant had really touched the nerve of the matter and proposed a solution to be conjured with.

III

Now, to say that the early Schneewind did not go quite far enough in bringing out Sidgwick's debt to Kant is very faint criticism, since he went so very far indeed in demonstrating how Sidgwick's philosophical world-view was shaped by the Kantian problematic, coming at him both directly via Kant, studied in German and in Germany, and indirectly, via the Cambridge moralists. A somewhat more damning criticism concerns how, for all the insight of the Kantian interpretation, it goes too far on a very big point, one that emerges with singular clarity in a number of the essays that came in the aftermath of *Sidgwick's Ethics*. It is in this connection that I will try to bring out the troubling questions that Schneewind's approach effectively excluded.

Thus, in his 1991 essay 'Natural Law, Skepticism, and the Methods of Ethics', after beginning with some remarks on how Kant's method for discovering what morality requires 'is a method that everyone can use', he explains:

> I take the label 'method of ethics' from the work of Henry Sidgwick. A method of ethics, he says, is any rational procedure by which we determine what it is right for an individual to do or what an individual ought to do. Since the moralists I want to consider do not all think of morality as rational, I shall broaden the notion by saying that a method is any systematic or regular procedure, rational or not, by which we determine what morality requires.
>
> Sidgwick does not say who the 'we' are who make use of a method of ethics. Are 'we' theorists or bystanders or members of a privileged social group who determine what others are to do? Or is a method something every normal adult uses, even if she is not aware of it as such and could not explicitly formulate it? If Sidgwick meant the latter, as I think he did, then it is worth noting that he simply took it for granted that everyone is in possession of some adequate method or other.[8]

Clearly, much swings on the details here, since if the ordinary person has an unconscious method that he or she could not explicitly formulate

[8] 'Natural Law, Skepticism, and Methods of Ethics', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 52 (April–June 1991), p. 289.

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or explain, the theorist or member of a privileged social group might for all practical purposes be able to call the shots by way of conscious practical guidance. What 'degree of publicity' does he have in mind here? But that Schneewind really has been drawn to making out Sidgwick as at least as much a moral democrat as Kant is evident from another essay, his 1993 'Classical Republicanism and the History of Ethics', which concludes:

> Mill and Sidgwick revised utilitarianism in ways that distance it from classical republicanism. They tried to show, as Bentham did not, how normal adults can see for themselves what morality requires in daily life. They also tried to show how each person could be moved to act morally, regardless of legislatively engineered sanctions. Both thus aimed at explaining how utilitarianism could be the morality of autonomous moral agents; and their shift in direction seems to have been accepted without question in recent utilitarian theorizing.[9]

I will leave aside the complex account in these essays, later fleshed out in *Invention*, of how Kant was more in line with the modern natural law tradition than Rousseau, and of how utilitarianism remains too indebted to the classical republican downplaying of conflict, conflict highlighting the separateness of individuals. Curiously, Schneewind does not, in these pieces, stress the Sidgwick that he so painstakingly revealed in his book – namely, the Sidgwick who was essentially dualistic and only qualifiedly utilitarian. But he does, in a strangely offhand way, effectively develop the Kantian reading worked out in the book, by way of showing how both Sidgwick and Mill were in effect qualifying utilitarianism by resort to considerations of moral autonomy, the view that any normal adult can see for him or herself, without benefit of moral experts, what morality requires of them in their daily life.

I do so wish that Sidgwick had believed that. But as appealing as this reading of Sidgwick may be, it cannot work, at least in any straightforward way, and it is suggestive of the Schneewind tendency to make the objects of his study sound better and clearer than they were. The crucial problem was set out with characteristic wit by Bernard Williams, in his essay 'The Point of View of the Universe: Sidgwick and the Ambitions of Ethics', a piece that originated as the Sidgwick Memorial Lecture in 1982, given at Newnham College, Cambridge (an institution that Sidgwick and his wife Eleanor virtually founded). What Williams drew attention to were some particularly provocative passages in the *Methods*, such as the following, in which Sidgwick's defence of two-level utilitarian indirection goes so far as to become a

[9] 'Classical Republicanism and the History of Ethics', *Utilitas* 5 (Nov. 1993), p. 207.

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defence of the possibility of utilitarianism being an esoteric morality, reserved for people capable of deploying it effectively:

> the Utilitarian conclusion, carefully stated, would seem to be this; that the opinion that secrecy may render an action right which would not otherwise be so should itself be kept comparatively secret; and similarly it seems expedient that the doctrine that esoteric morality is expedient should itself be kept esoteric. Or if this concealment be difficult to maintain, it may be desirable that Common Sense should repudiate the doctrines which it is expedient to confine to an enlightened few. And thus a Utilitarian may reasonably desire, on Utilitarian principles, that some of his conclusions should be rejected by mankind generally; or even that the vulgar should keep aloof from his system as a whole, in so far as the inevitable indefiniteness and complexity of its calculations render it likely to lead to bad results in their hands.[10]

As Williams famously glossed this bit:

> On this kind of account, Utilitarianism emerges as the morality of an elite, and the distinction between theory and practice determines a class of theorists distinct from other persons, theorists in whose hands the truth of the Utilitarian justification of non-Utilitarian dispositions will be responsibly deployed. This outlook accords well enough with the important colonial origins of Utilitarianism. This version may be called 'Government House Utilitarianism'. It only partly deals with the problem [of theory and practice], since it is not generally true, and it was not indeed true of Sidgwick, that Utilitarians of this type, even though they are theorists, are prepared themselves to do without the useful dispositions altogether. So they still have some problem of reconciling the two consciousnesses in their own persons – even though the vulgar are relieved of that problem, since they are not burdened with the full consciousness of the Utilitarian justification.[11]

Although Williams was not formulating his interpretation as a direct critique of Schneewind (and to the best of my knowledge, Schneewind has never replied directly to it), it effectively amounts to such. For as he went on to observe, other ethical theories

> might at least satisfy one test which . . . Sidgwick's notably and confessedly failed (though he seems not to have regarded it as a failing), the test of being *open*; the requirement, that is to say, that if the theory in question governs the practice of a given group, then it must be possible for everyone in that group to know that it does. Rawls's theory, for instance, reasonably introduces, and itself passes, this test.[12]

The test in question is of course cast by Rawls as the famous publicity requirement, and as such acknowledged as a fundamental element of the Kantian approach, given immortal expression in *Perpetual Peace*:

[10] H. Sidgwick, *Methods of Ethics*, 7th edn. (London, 1907), pp. 489–90.
[11] 'The Point of View of the Universe', reprinted in Williams, *Making Sense of Humanity* (New York, 1995), p. 166.
[12] Ibid., p. 169.

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'All actions affecting the rights of other human beings are wrong if their maxim is not compatible with being made public.'

Williams does not, unfortunately, suggest the complications that arise from Sidgwick's dualism, but it is safe to say that rational egoism could also enthusiastically endorse the option of esotericism, should that have the best consequences for the agent. At any rate, for all of its Kantian sympathies, or perhaps because of them, *Sidgwick's Ethics* failed to recognize these passages in the *Methods* for what they were. When the early Schneewind turns his attention to them, he simply remarks, following some of Sidgwick's less controversial glossings, that:

> the utilitarian will be led, more generally, to the conclusion that it is undesirable to have everyone calculating everything on a utilitarian basis, since the unavoidable indefiniteness of such calculations leaves scope for the wicked and the weak to construct specious excuses for their misbehaviour . . . The point raises in turn the more general question of the significance of divergent moral beliefs in a society. If common-sense moral rules are generally taken to be valid, what is the utilitarian to do when there are conflicting opinions each claiming that stature? Sidgwick thinks that while contradictory moral beliefs cannot both be correct it may be advantageous at times to have conflicting opinions held by different social groups – one is reminded here of John Stuart Mill's passionate defence of diversity of opinion – and so it may be best that one person should commit an act, for which he is condemned by a segment of society.[13]

Would that it were so. But, after reading Williams, the reader who confronts these passages is more apt to be reminded of the involvement of the Mills in the imperial rule of India than of any Millian defence of diversity in the domestic context. Or, if the reader has happened to read Sidgwick's *Practical Ethics*, of such claims as the following, from the essay 'The Ethics of Religious Conformity':

> I admit cases in which deception may legitimately be practised for the good of the person deceived. Under a physician's orders I should not hesitate to speak falsely to save an invalid from a dangerous shock. And I can imagine a high-minded thinker persuading himself that the mass of mankind are normally in a position somewhat analogous to that of such an invalid; that they require for their individual and social well-being to be comforted by hopes, and spurred and cured by terrors, that have no rational foundation. Well, in a community like that of Paraguay under the Jesuits, with an enlightened few monopolizing intellectual culture and a docile multitude giving implicit credence to their instruction, it might be possible – and for a man with such convictions it might conceivably be right – to support a fictitious theology for the good of the community by systematic falsehood.[14]

[13] *Sidgwick's Ethics*, p. 347.
[14] Sidgwick, *Practical Ethics*, ed. S. Bok (New York, 1998), pp. 73–4.

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Schneewind has never explained how, on a Sidgwickian conception of a method of ethics, the 'docile multitude' of moral invalids – as Sidgwick slanderously depicts native Americans – was supposed to be at some level deploying a method of ethics with the best of the Jesuits. Nor was Williams adding a bit of nasty wit when he described the conflict as that between the theorist and the vulgar. Sidgwick regularly spoke of the mass of humanity as the vulgar, the sensual herd, the common herd, savages, or worse.

Admittedly, in *Practical Ethics*, Sidgwick immediately goes on to say that such tactics of 'pious fraud' would not work in modern England, 'where everyone reads and no one can be prevented from printing'. Still, the flavour of these remarks, which have to do with practical efficacy rather than philosophical principle, hardly resonates with Kant on matters of lying and publicity. Plato's noble lie, so beloved by the philosopher imperialists, would be more like it. And as I shall presently suggest, Sidgwick was in truth not at all averse to esotericism at home, as well as abroad, particularly with respect to matters of religion, sexuality and race. Indeed, ironically, given his reputation for honesty, esotericism was virtually second nature to him.

Williams's debunking of any reading of Sidgwick that stresses his faith in the moral capacities of ordinary people has been given an interesting twist by Margaret Urban Walker, in her feminist critique of Sidgwick, *Moral Understandings*. For Walker, Sidgwick's *Methods* is 'a carefully reasoned operator's manual for the scientific utilitarian ethic in the hands of an élite'. It is this elite, 'people in positions of political or administrative power', who 'are at once most in need of a systematic view, because they are responsible for whole systems'. They 'are most likely to be able to put such a view into practice . . . because their power opens workings of that system to them at will, from places of privilege which most mothers will never enter, or even get a clear view of'. Thus, Sidgwick

> judiciously counsels the wise few to take care for such matters as lost power and credibility, negative moral kickbacks of utilitarian attempts at moral reform that are not matched by hoped-for gains, and possible unsavory impacts on the utilitarian operative's own character.

Rather than say, with Sidgwick, that the sincere utilitarian would likely be an 'eager politician', Walker suggest that 'historically and practically' the 'tendency was likely to be the other way around'.[15]

To be sure, neither Williams nor Walker ever even tries to back up such claims about Sidgwick's imperialist tendencies by providing evidence about his political views, theoretical or practical. Thus,

[15] Walker, *Moral Understandings: A Feminist Study of Ethics* (New York, 1998), p. 43.

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Walker's feminist critique does not so much as remark that Sidgwick was generally recognized as a Millian feminist, one who devoted an extraordinary amount of time and effort to the cause of higher education for women. Yet her critique does point to the serious need for further research on gender issues in Sidgwick's life and work, something that had been almost entirely absent from all previous philosophical commentary on Sidgwick, including Schneewind's. To get any sense of the meaning and limits of Sidgwick's feminism, one must turn to such studies as Rita Tullberg McWilliams's *Women at Cambridge* and other works of a more purely historical nature.[16] This, I think, was a major failing of all twentieth-century philosophical commentary on Sidgwick. Paying closer attention to Sidgwick's political and practical ethical work would have greatly aided Sidgwick studies on this count and on many others. And such attention would have brought out just how given Sidgwick was to various forms of esotericism. Time and space preclude any comprehensive examination of the ways in which Sidgwick was indeed given to esotericism, but I would like to highlight a couple of the most important issues, issues that point up the difficulties involved in interpreting him as a moral democrat of some sort. Let me say in advance that I can imagine various neo-Kantian, Rawlsian-style rejoinders to the critique that follows, invoking the different degrees of publicity that might be expected of, say, an ordinary person rather than a moral philosopher. Such gambits need to be deployed on behalf of Kant himself, who had his own very serious failings. But my concern here is to bring out the problem in the most uncompromising and disturbing terms, the better to see which lines of response Schneewind finds most promising.

IV

Among the odder paradoxes arising from Sidgwick's life and work is the way in which he enjoyed, during and after his lifetime, a reputation for extraordinary honesty and candour, while he was in fact busily theorizing and implementing an esoteric morality. Even Williams observes that there 'was quite a strong tendency, at least in liberal circles, to regard Sidgwick as rather saintly. This was a response in particular to his intellectual honesty, to be found both in the marked scrupulousness of the argument of *The Methods of Ethics*, and also in his resignation of his Fellowship because he could not subscribe sincerely to the Thirty-Nine Articles.'[17] Of course, what Williams does

[16] Rita Tullberg McWilliams, Women at Cambridge (Cambridge, rev. edn. 1998).
[17] Williams, 'Point of View', p. 154. Williams notes that Bloomsbury went on to question his reputation.

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not note is how Sidgwick admittedly went on to keep 'strict silence' with regard to his deeper religious doubts, out of the conviction that public morality, at that time and place, still very much required the religious buttress. Hence, for utilitarian reasons, he did not want to do anything to further the decline of popular religious belief, though he would in private be open to considering such issues when raised by philosophically inclined minds already given to doubt. As he put it to an old friend:

> the reason why I keep strict silence now for many years with regard to theology is that while I cannot myself discover adequate rational basis for the Christian hope of happy immortality, it seems to me that the general loss of such a hope, from the minds of average human beings as now constituted, would be an evil of which I cannot pretend to measure the extent. I am not prepared to say that the dissolution of the existing social order would follow, but I think the danger of such dissolution would be seriously increased, and that the evil would certainly be very great.[18]

But Sidgwick did not simply stick to negative inaction on this matter, since after all, his most beloved discussion society, the Cambridge Apostles, was really in many respects a subversive organization long before the Cambridge spies came along; in Sidgwick's day it was out to undermine, typically in a behind-the-scenes way, the hold of orthodox Anglican religion on such social institutions as Oxbridge. Thus, with religion as with morals, what was appropriate for the educated elite was one thing, what was appropriate for the general public was something else. And Sidgwick's feminist reformism was rather akin to his religious reformism, in its vanguardist tendency to keep the pace of reform slow because of fear of the effects, possibly a backlash, resulting from public disclosure.

Still, as these particular examples should suggest, Sidgwick's esoteric elitism was often a type of vanguardism that was as sceptical of the abilities of real world social elites – aristocrats, religious conservatives, etc. – as it was of the general public, whose literacy was, even in the later Victorian era, hardly something to take for granted. One might say that Sidgwick was an educational reformer who recognized how far genuine education had to go at all levels of society. Neither Williams nor Walker manage to indicate, or so much as try to indicate, just how critically distanced Sidgwick was from the religious and political status quo, which like Mill he often blasted for its 'stupid conservatism', even if Arthur Balfour was his brother-in-law.

And yet in one very worrisome respect, Sidgwick may have been more reflective of his milieu than a philosopher with his critical acumen

[18] *Henry Sidgwick, A Memoir*, ed. A. Sidgwick and E. M. Sidgwick (London, 1906), p. 357.

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should have been. As Edward Said has so persuasively urged, the late Victorian era was not simply the age of imperialism, but the age of an imperialism that legitimated itself in large measure through racial – and racist – constructions of those populations being subjugated. However incoherent such racial constructions may have been – and they were deeply incoherent – it was race, in some sense, as much as class or mere difference, that underlay much of imperialist thinking at the height of the British empire. Such is Said's 'orientalist' thesis.[19]

Now, it is the possible applicability of Said's thesis to Sidgwick that I find so profoundly troubling. One of the characters that looms large in Said's account is Sir John Seeley, author of the infamous *The Expansion of England*, which became a virtual textbook for the new imperialist thinkers of the late Victorian period. Seeley, as it turns out, was a much admired friend and colleague of Sidgwick's, and Sidgwick in fact edited and introduced his posthumous *Introduction to Political Science*, never suggesting that there was anything wrong with Seeley's substantive claims on behalf of empire. It is revealing that *Sidgwick's Ethics* discusses Seeley at some length, but manages to do so without ever noting that he was one of the intellectual architects of the age of empire, one who, with Sidgwick, helped to turn Cambridge into something of a school for statesmen along the lines of Jowett's Oxford. The focus is entirely on Seeley's early, anonymous religious work, *Ecce Homo*, which Sidgwick critically reviewed.

Yet, this connection is in itself suggestive of how Sidgwick might well have viewed much of the world as fitting the model of Paraguay under the Jesuits, with a none too generous view of common-sense morality with a different complexion. He apparently managed to lull his sceptical conscience to sleep when it came to the matter of England's civilizing mission, from time to time letting drop some statement to the effect that naturally enough his country might have to 'commit acts which cannot but be regarded as aggressive by the savage nations whom it is their business to educate and absorb'.[20] Nor was it only a question of 'savage' nations – he would also remark on how the only remaining civilization that it was left to the British to 'overcome' – his word – was that of the Chinese.

[19] See e.g. *Orientalism* (New York, 1979). For a much publicized line of criticism, see David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: How the British saw their Empire* (Oxford, 2001). Victor Kiernan's *The Lords of Human Kind: European Attitudes to Other Cultures in the Imperial Age* (London, 1969; rev. edn. 1995), remains an effective antidote to nostalgia about the British imperial enterprise.

[20] *Lectures on the Ethics of T. H. Green, H. Spencer, and J. Martineau*, ed. E. E. Constance Jones (London, 1902), p. 1902. Given how often *Sidgwick's Ethics* does make reference to this work, it is all the more surprising that it could sidestep the question of orientalism.

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But for present purposes, I would like to focus on a few specific issues concerning race. One of the biggest shocks that I experienced while doing research on Sidgwick came when I found that, although he scrupulously avoids the word in his published works, in his political correspondence he now and then casually uses the 'N word' – 'nigger'. Thus, in a letter to Lord Lytton, the former Viceroy of India, he sets about explaining the importance of recognizing the difference between matters of international comity and strict international duty, concluding: 'I mean, at least, that U.S.A. took this view of the treatment of British niggers by South Carolina in 1849–51, for the Federal Government is constitutionally bound to punish "offences against the law of nations"'. And in a letter to his close friend James Bryce, the Oxford academic and statesman, he remarked of Bryce's claims about the future of the United States: 'Only people of European origin appear to be contemplated in this forecast. Is the nigger no longer a problem, and is the Mongolian played out?'[21] It would be a mistake generously to wave aside such usage as excusable ancestral innocence, perhaps the result of the bumbling academic having read Mark Twain. For as is well known, Sidgwick's post-Darwinian era was actually witnessing a sharp increase in racist thinking, and this in ways that the previous generation, including Mill, Maine and other influences on Sidgwick, found offensive even at the time. Recall how Mill had responded critically to Carlyle's rabidly racist 'The Nigger Question' with his piece on 'The Negro Question'.[22] And recall too that Sidgwick was careful not to deploy such terms in his published work, suggesting that he knew full well that there was nothing innocent about them. In one of his more astonishingly manipulative tactics, he actually managed to publish a review essay dealing with Charles Henry Pearson's *National Life and Character* that failed to so much as note that the book's central thesis concerned the dire future potential for racial conflict, with its threat to white supremacy.[23] Although he criticized the book sharply, Sidgwick also called it 'the most impressive book of a prophetic nature which has

[21] Both of these letters are reproduced in *Henry Sidgwick: Eye of the Universe*, ch. 7; they are also included in *The Complete Works and Select Correspondence of Henry Sidgwick*, general ed. B. Schultz, 2nd edn. (Charlottesville, VA, 1999).

[22] Though it is difficult to exonerate Mill entirely, when it comes to the issue of racism. See David Theo Goldberg's important essay, 'Liberalism's Limits: Carlyle and Mill and "The Negro Question"', *Philosophers on Race: Critical Essays*, ed. J. K. Ward and T. L. Lott (Oxford, 2002), pp. 195–204. See also the various contributions to *The Classical Utilitarians on Questions of Race and Empire*, ed. B. Schultz and G. Varouxakis (Lanham, MD, 2004), particularly Varouxakis's 'Accident of Birth, Improvement, and the Racial Factor: J. S. Mill and his Critics', which defends Mill against Goldberg's critique.

[23] Charles Henry Pearson, *National Life and Character* (London, 1893).

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appeared in England for many years'.[24] Pearson was a friend and for a time a Cambridge colleague of Sidgwick's; an admirer of Nietzsche and Ibsen who had moved to Australia and there fanned fears about the 'Yellow Peril' posed by Chinese immigrant labourers, he was emphatic in his expressions of concern about non-white races. Thus, in lamenting the limitations of contemporary politics, he complained in his book that 'the transportation of an inferior race, like the negroes of the United States, to a country where they would be harmless, is too vast, and of too uncertain benefit, to be readily attempted'.[25] His basic position, as Sidgwick later described it in a festschrift in Pearson's honour, was that if the 'Liberal ideal of open competition were maintained, the human world would gradually become mainly yellow, with a black band round the tropics, and perhaps an aristocratic film of white on the surface!'[26] At points, Pearson seemed to be vaguely regretting the political unacceptability of genocide, in dealing with 'the lower races'. At any rate, when he describes the view of race relations that he regards as commonsensical but overly complacent, it is in these terms:

> No one, of course, assumes that the Aryan race – to use a convenient term – can stamp out or starve out all their rivals on the face of the earth. It is self-evident that the Chinese, the Japanese, the Hindoos, if we may apply this general term to the various natives of India, and the African negro, are too numerous and sturdy to be extirpated. It is against the fashion of modern humanity to wish that they should suffer decrease or oppression. What is assumed is that the first three of these races will remain stationary within their present limits, while the negro will contribute an industrial population to the states which England and Germany will build up along the Congo or the Zambesi. The white man in these parts of the world is to be the planter, the mine-owner, and manufacturer, the merchant, and the leading employee under all these, contributing energy and capital to the new countries, while the negro is to be the field-hand, the common miner, and the factory operative. Here and there, in exceptional districts, the white man will predominate in numbers, but everywhere he will govern and direct in virtue of a higher intelligence and more resolute will.[27]

There is simply no way that Sidgwick could have been innocently unaware of what he was doing when he published a review of this work that criticized its method while trumpeting its importance and censoring its leading racist claims. This may not be quite on a par with the Heidegger problem, but it is a very bad performance for a moral philosopher. Moreover, what one witnesses here is simply the application of a principle actually formulated in the *Methods* – namely,

[24] 'Political Prophecy and Sociology', *National Review* (Dec. 1894), reprinted in *Miscellaneous Essays and Addresses*, p. 219.
[25] Pearson, *Character*, pp. 16–17.
[26] *Charles Henry Pearson: Memorials by Himself, his Wife, and his Friends*, ed. W. Stebbing (London, 1900), p. 186.
[27] Pearson, *Character*, p. 31.

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that, as a footnote on p. 488 of the fifth edition puts it, 'it would be commonly thought wrong to express in public speeches disturbing religious or political opinions which may be legitimately published in books'.[28] Political speeches, or the more popular periodical press, were one thing, academic tomes another. And Sidgwick was so cautious that even his books tended to put matters in a colourlessly abstract way, while yet somehow or the other insinuating the point. The obvious reply to the historically naive question of why Sidgwick would have explained his rationale for esotericism to the extent that he did is that he was confident it would only reach a 'safe' audience.

For my part, it was precisely when trying to understand Sidgwick's ideas in context by reading the books to which he kept referring that the question of his racism began to loom. Pearson was one case in point; Bryce was another. Sidgwick was even closer to Bryce, who by the way also enthusiastically praised Pearson's work and was instrumental in getting it published. Sidgwick gave Bryce extensive comments on the proofs of *The American Commonwealth*, and Bryce returned the favour by giving Sidgwick much feedback on the proofs of *The Elements of Politics*. It was in this connection that Sidgwick used the term 'nigger', in the letter quoted earlier. And when one turns to Bryce's *American Commonwealth*, one finds that it is, if not as rabidly alarmist as Pearson's work, nonetheless fundamentally racist, positively shot through with racist stereotypes masquerading as analyses of 'national character'. For Bryce, it was mistake to grant the American negro political equality, in the aftermath of the civil war. And as he elaborates:

> Against the industrial progress of the Negro there must be set two depressing phenomena. One is the increase of insanity, marked since emancipation, and probably attributable to the increased facilities which freedom has given for obtaining liquor, and to the stress which independence and education have imposed on the undeveloped brain of a backward race. The other, not unconnected with the former, is the large amount of crime. Most of it is petty crime, chiefly thefts of hogs and poultry, but there are also a good many crimes against women. Seventy per cent of the convicts in Southern jails are Negroes; and though one must allow for the fact that they are the poorest part of the population and that the law is probably more strictly enforced against them than against the whites, this is a proportion double that of their numbers.[29]

Bryce, in a word, virtually defines the expression 'blaming the victim', and he goes on to talk about the developing problem of 'race repulsion'

[28] *The Methods of Ethics* (London, 1893), p. 488.

[29] Bryce, *The American Commonwealth* (Indianapolis, 1995, first edn. 1888), pp. 1152–3. The Liberty Fund edition carries an introduction by Gary McDowell that manages, like nearly all commentary on Bryce, to evade completely the question of his racism.

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in the United States and elsewhere:

> Even at the North, where the aversion to Negro blood is now less strong, 'miscegenation', as they call it, is deemed such a disgrace to the white who contracts it that one seldom hears of its occurrence. Enlightened Southern men, who have themselves no dislike to the black race, justify this horror of intermarriage by arguing that no benefit which might thereby accrue to the Negroes could balance the evil which would befall the rest of the community. The interests of the nation and of humanity itself would, in their view, suffer by such a permanent debasement of the Anglo-American race as would follow. Our English blood is suffering enough already, they say, from the intrusion of inferior stock from continental Europe; and we should be brought down to the level of San Domingo were we to have an infusion of Africa added.[30]

Make no mistake about it: Bryce finds this a powerful line of argument. He continues by allowing: 'This is the argument to which reason appeals. That enormous majority which does not reason is swayed by a feeling so strong and universal that there seems no chance of its abating within an assignable time.' Bryce hopes for progress, and for the repression of lynching and other evils, but he is not optimistic about overcoming the colour line or alternatives to *de facto* forms of Apartheid, in the United States and Africa.

Although it took me longer than it should have to recognize this, Sidgwick did not, for all his greater scepticism, effectively distance himself from such views. He pronounced Bryce's book a 'great work', and it clearly influenced him profoundly. Buried deep in *The Elements of Politics* is a footnote that explains:

> Of course if it should become clear that the social amalgamation of two races would be debasing to the superior race, or otherwise demonstrably opposed to the interests of humanity at large, every effort ought to be made to carry into effect some drastic and permanent measures of separation.[31]

To his credit, Sidgwick did allow that the case had not yet been made for such permanent segregation in any real-world instance, and he was consistently sceptical of pseudo-scientific claims about the relative effects of nature versus nurture. Still, this was the rare case in which he did not doubt enough. His Millian sensibilities and critical abilities could and should have at least led him to blast Bryce and Pearson in the way that Mill had blasted Carlyle. Instead, he affirmed their positions as very serious possibilities and sought to stage-manage the debate to keep it from alarming the races and classes whose abilities were in question.[32] As in the case of religion, he did not want to be personally responsible for

[30] Ibid., p. 1164.
[31] *The Elements of Politics* (London, 1891), p. 314.
[32] In this he fits very well the picture of Victorian era anxieties sketched by Alan Ryan in *Liberal Anxieties and Liberal Education* (New York, 1998), pp. 54–71.

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doing anything that might contribute to the serious emerging threats to social order, and his evasive esotericism found a natural habitat in the realm of abstract principle and principled abstraction.

What this case in point helps illustrate is just how right Walker is to urge that we must ask, as Sidgwick asked:

> For whom are the labors of moral philosophers and the accounts that these labors produce? What are moral philosophers imagining as the social realization of the views they propose and defend? If moral philosophy answers a need or has a use, whose need is this and where is moral philosophy used?[33]

Indeed, this is especially true of the utilitarians, as Schneewind himself has stressed. In a short review of the *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill: Volume 6, Essays on England, Ireland, and the Empire*, he quite rightly observed that:

> Mill's philosophical position was being worked out during the years in which he was writing what we have here. And what these essays make clear is that despite the famous break with the older Benthamism and the rigid teaching of his father, the younger Mill carried on the utilitarian tradition of elaborating a general philosophical position in the light of a strong moral sense of what was required for social and political reform.[34]

So true, and all the more reason why the early Schneewind should not have ignored Sidgwick's *Elements of Politics* and *Practical Ethics*, either one of which would have helped him at least to warn, however fleetingly, that Sidgwick's philosophical ethics ought to be interrogated for racist subtexts, especially if one wants to come to terms with just how elitist this conception of a method might have been. Had he read Bryce and Pearson, in addition to Eliot and Clough, he would, I am sure, have felt compelled to extend his range of contexts for Sidgwick's ideas.

Still, some care must be taken not to blame all of Sidgwick's failings on his utilitarian tendencies. If it is tolerably plain that there is some problem in labelling him a moral democrat, given what is in effect his admission that moral expertise might turn out to be distributed along racial lines, it is not at all plain that his racist tendencies were not also in some fundamental way another side of his Kantian inheritance. For even Kant, the leading source of Schneewind's conception of moral democracy, was guilty of racism. As Robert Bernasconi has argued, 'Kant saw race mixing as leading to a degradation or pollution of Whites, as loss of some of their talents and dispositions', and his supposed cosmopolitanism apparently, at times, involved the suggestion that 'All races will be extinguished . . . only not

[33] Walker, *Moral Understandings*, p. 45.
[34] *Dialogue* (Sept. 1984), p. 554.

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that of the Whites.'[35] Hence, even if Sidgwick were as much of a Kantian as Schneewind suggests, and less committed to esotericism, concerns about his racism and the coherence of his notion of moral democracy would still be called for. It is not enough to invoke, in the case of either Sidgwick or Kant, how they take their point of departure from moral common sense etc., since both could be very selective in their construction of common sense. Unfortunately, for all their erudition, neither of Schneewind's major books ever so much as broaches this fundamental question about the limits of moral democracy in Kant and Kantianism.

V

There is one more point on which I would criticize *Sidgwick's Ethics* for failing to decode Sidgwick's deeper concerns, his esoteric worries unfit for public consumption. It is a striking fact that virtually all of Sidgwick's closest friends were champions of Greek love, that is, of same-sex love between men, often of a more or less pederastic classical type (men and adolescents). His intimate and ancient friends Roden Noel, F. W. Myers, H. G. Dakyns, Oscar Browning, and John Addington Symonds, and his dearest brother Arthur, shared such tendencies, which they tended to regard as having a political and cultural significance for ushering in a new and more sympathetic age, not simply as personal predilections. Symonds was particularly important. One of the English 'Whitmanians' and a true pioneer of what would in due course become gay studies and gay liberation, Symonds brilliantly analysed the nature and cultural significance of homosexuality in such classic works as 'A Problem in Greek Ethics' and 'A Problem in Modern Ethics'.[36] Sidgwick's friendship with Symonds was one of the things that, as the *Memoir* puts it, he 'valued most in life', and he profoundly sympathized with Symonds's efforts.[37]

However, cautious and esoteric reformer that he was, Sidgwick did end up mostly struggling to keep his friend from having a public

[35] 'Kant as an Unfamiliar Source of Racism', *Philosophers on Race*, p. 159. Bernasconi brilliantly points up how the so-called 'Rawlsian Revolution' has involved the effective erasure of Kant's racism.

[36] Both were originally circulated privately in pamphlet form, though they eventually were incorporated in the work Symonds was planning with Havelock Ellis, *Sexual Inversion*, which appeared posthumously in 1897. Sidgwick, Brown and Dakyns effectively suppressed this work, ensuring that Symonds's name would not be associated with it in the English version. But Sidgwick was very impressed with the intellectual calibre of 'A Problem in Greek Ethics' especially, and with good reason. This pamphlet has also impressed such recent scholars as Sir Kenneth Dover and Gregory Vlastos.

[37] I should go on record as stating that, in my view, Sidgwick was bisexual in so far as he was sexual at all. But he harboured a rather Platonic notion of and aspiration to become the 'superior man' that in fact rendered him only reluctantly a sexual being. See my *Henry Sidgwick: Eye of the Universe*, ch. 6.

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scandal brought down upon him, from becoming, in effect, a precursor to Oscar Wilde. Thus, he was forever coaching him on how to keep his homoerotic verse sufficiently esoteric that the vulgar, especially religious conservatives, would be unable to mount an attack on it. Furthermore, following Symonds's death in 1893, Sidgwick, in the very years of the Wilde trial, worked closely with Symonds's literary executor Horatio Forbes Brown to produce an authorized biography of Symonds that carefully excised anything at all suggestive of his friend's sexual politics, transforming Symonds's often agonized struggles with his sexual inclinations into good old Victorian religious doubt. Here again, what we have is much more than negative inaction on Sidgwick's part, or anything that could be defended as simply keeping private affairs private.[38] *John Addington Symonds*, *A Biography* was a positive lie – a very long and elaborate one, to be sure, but a lie nonetheless, meant to throw the public off the scent. Interestingly, Sidgwick may well have performed a similar service for the son of one of his heroes, the poet Tennyson; at Sidgwick's behest, Hallam Tennyson destroyed countless compromising letters, and produced a biography of his great father that was sanitized in much the manner of the Symonds biography and perhaps on racial matters as well.[39]

For someone with Schneewind's literary sensibilities, Sidgwick's involvement with such figures should have been of some interest. And for anyone with a philosophical interest in Sidgwick's ethics, the links between Sidgwick and Symonds should be of considerable interest. As with the issue of race, Sidgwick's practical sexual ethics reveals just how far he was from countenancing any high opinion of the moral capacities of ordinary people, and how far he went in effectively dividing the vanguardist moral theorist from the vulgar herd, who needed moral uplift from the very religion that Sidgwick doubted and feared. Moreover, Symonds was an extraordinarily intelligent and philosophical friend, and his correspondence with Sidgwick is by far the most philosophically revealing of any of Sidgwick's seemingly endless letters. *Sidgwick's Ethics* mentions Symonds only twice, but it does so in the chapter on 'The Dualism of Practical Reason', one of the most important chapters in the book, not in the introductory biographical material on Sidgwick. Indeed, it was precisely Schneewind's book that made me wonder about the significance of Symonds, for the quotations

[38] *John Addington Symonds, A Biography* (London, 1895). The whole story concerning this work is told for the first time in *Strange Audacious Life*, by Schultz, Dakyns and Robinson (forthcoming), which shows how Sidgwick, as much as Edmund Gosse (who as head of the London Library destroyed much of Symonds's literary legacy), was responsible for Symonds's posthumous reputation. For a briefer statement, see my 'Eye of the Universe: Henry Sidgwick and the Problem Public', *Utilitas* 14 (July 2002).

[39] On this, see *Strange Audacious Life*.

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from his journal exchanges with Symonds are crucial to the explanation of just how troubled Sidgwick was by the dualism of practical reason and how devoted he was to the harmonization project.

I note in closing that Schneewind's justly celebrated bibliography in *Sidgwick's Ethics* does not include the works by Pearson, Bryce and Symonds that I have mentioned.[40] Nor does it mention the monumental *Letters of John Addington Symonds*, which appeared in the late 1960s, and which makes the nature of the Sidgwick–Symonds connection quite plain.[41] Schueller is mentioned in the acknowledgements, however, and I have often wondered just how much Jerry was leaving esoteric when he published his first big book. Clearly, he had read enough to suspect that his neo-Kantian Sidgwick might raise some explosive questions, when it came to racism and pederasty (the more problematic side of the Symonds legacy).[42] Perhaps it is worth noting that, while *Sidgwick's Ethics* ended with many flourishes, making it sound as though Rawls's *A Theory of Justice* would be the realization of Sidgwick's dreams for ethical theory, *The Invention of Autonomy* ends with a few flourishes invoking, not Rawls, but Parfit and the hopes for a purely secular conception of ethics. It is a paradoxical juxtaposition, and one that cannot help but make me wonder whether the next big book – and I very much hope there is one – will more effectively reconcile the earlier and later Schneewinds. I hope that it will do so by going beyond both Rawls and Parfit, and dealing with the more problematic sides of those figures in the history of moral philosophy that the earlier books so resolutely ennoble.[43]

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[40] Curiously, although it does not list the Brown biography, it does include *The Letters and Papers of John Addington Symonds* (London, 1923), a later (and still censored) volume assembled by Brown. Moreover, Schneewind had personally examined the correspondence between Sidgwick and Dakyns, which effectively reveals their sympathetic censorship of the Symonds life story. The complete, matched correspondence is now available in *The Complete Works and Select Correspondence of Henry Sidgwick.*

[41] The *Letters of John Addington Symonds*, 3 vols., ed. H. Schueller and R. Peters (Detroit, 1967–9).

[42] Indeed, even those deeply sympathetic to LGBTQ scholarship and politics, myself included, have some qualms about the Symonds legacy. See, for example, the important critical treatments in Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York, 1985), especially the 'Coda', and David A. J. Richards, *Women, Gays, and the Constitution* (Chicago, 1998), esp. ch. 6. Unfortunately, as both these works illustrate, scholarship on Symonds is in a fairly deplorable state, with most commentary on him being utterly derivative and quite uninformed by a serious knowledge of his intellectual (and personal) contexts. The only serious recent book on him is *John Addington Symonds: Culture and the Demon Desire*, ed. J. Pemble (London, 2000).

[43] My deepest thanks, as always, to Jerry Schneewind, who remains the best critic of his own work.

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