The question of the basis of morality:
What basic principles explain why certain actions are right and other actions are wrong?

What we look for in an answer:
1. **Explanation**: Principles that do not merely sort actions into right and wrong, but principles that explain why actions are so sorted.
2. **Agreement with moral judgment**: Principles should sort actions in a way that more or less agrees with our moral judgment.
3. **Plausibility**: The principles should seem compelling in their own right. They should help to explain why *it matters* whether an action is right or wrong.
4. **One or many?** There need not be a single basic principle. There might be several. But arriving at several principles has certain disadvantages.
   a. First, we may doubt whether these principles really are basic, and wonder whether there isn’t some more basic principle that explains them.
   b. Second, if there are several principles, then they may conflict. Since they are equally basic, it is not clear how we settle these conflicts.

Sidgwick’s proposal:
*Utilitarianism*: It is wrong to produce a smaller total sum of pleasure less pain than you otherwise could.

Problems with Common Sense:
“The Morality of Common Sense” seems to disagree. It offers a list of moral rules, many of which make no reference to the effects on happiness: don’t lie, don’t steal, don’t break your promises, etc.

*Intuitionism*: tries to “throw the Morality of Common Sense into a scientific form.”

Is this possible? How do we distinguish “scientific axioms” from mere opinions?
I: “The terms of the proposition must be clear and precise.”
II: “The self-evidence of the proposition must be ascertained by careful reflection.”
III: “The propositions accepted as self-evident must be mutually consistent.”
IV: The proposition must be generally affirmed.

The principles of commonsense do not meet these conditions.
- In some cases, we cannot find any definite principle at all.
- As soon we find definite principles, disagreements arise, and alternatives seem no less plausible.
- Common sense gives us no guidance on how to resolve these conflicts.

Example 1: Promises
- Promises to do immoral things.
- Slavery contracts.
• Promises made under coercion.
• Promises made with deception, concealment of important facts, or misleading.
• Promises that cost the promisor more than they benefit the promisee.
• Promises that harm the promisee.

Example 2: Truth telling
• Lying to people who are trying to violate our rights.
• Lying to people who are trying to violate others’ rights.
• Lying to people when telling them the truth would harm them.
• Lying to children when they ask inappropriate questions.
• Lying to questioners who have “no right to know.”
• Is lying different from misleading, or from concealment?

The relationship between utilitarianism and intuitionism:
The negative point: commonsense is a mess.

The positive point: utilitarianism systematizes (organizes, extends, harmonizes, etc.) commonsense in a natural way. When we need to explain exceptions, draw definite boundaries, resolve conflict, we turn instinctively to utilitarianism. Indeed, common sense seems “unconsciously Utilitarian” (424).

In our terms:
First, utilitarianism agrees with much of our moral judgment.

Second, utilitarianism is plausible in its own right.
“What should we do?”
Utilitarianism: “Make the world as good as we can.”

“What makes the world better?”
Utilitarianism: “That people (and, perhaps other animals) have better lives.”

What makes people’s lives better?
Utilitarianism: “More pleasure and less pain.”

More precisely: When we put together:
Consequentialism: We are morally required to do what would produce the best outcome.

Aggregation: The outcome is better if the sum of what is good for each person (or animal) minus what is bad for each person (or animal) is greater.

and
Hedonism: What is good for us as an end is pleasure, and what is bad for us as an end is pain.

We get:
Utilitarianism: We are morally required to do what would produce the greatest total of pleasure minus pain.