

TEXTES SÉANCE 2 :

(1) Our question 'What is good?' may have still another meaning. We may mean to ask, not what thing or things are good, but how 'good' is to be defined. [...] It is an enquiry to which most special attention should be directed; since this question, how 'good' is to be defined, is the most fundamental question in all Ethics. [...] But, if we understand the question in this sense, my answer to it may seem a very disappointing one. If I am asked 'What is good?' my answer is that good is good, and that it is the end of the matter. Or if I am asked 'How good is to be defined.' My answer is that it cannot be defined, and that it is all I have to say about it. But as disappointing as these answers may appear, they are of the very last importance. To readers who are familiar with philosophic terminology, I can express their importance by saying that they amount to this: That propositions about the good are all of them synthetic and never analytic; and that is plainly no trivial matter. And the same thing may be expressed more popularly, by saying that, if I am right, then nobody can foist upon us such an axiom as that 'Pleasure is the only good' or that 'The good is the desired' on the pretence that this is 'the very meaning of the word'. [...] My point is that 'good' is a simple notion, just as 'yellow' is a simple notion; that, just as you cannot, by any manner of means, explain to anyone who does not already know it, what yellow is, so you cannot explain what good is.

George Edward Moore, *Principia Ethica*, chap. I, §5-7, 1903

(2) Suppose a man says 'I am pleased' [...] It means that his mind has at this moment a certain definite feeling called pleasure. 'Pleased' means nothing but having pleasure, and though we may be more or less pleased; yet in so far as it is pleasure we have, what we have is one definite thing, absolutely indefinable [...] No difficulty need then to be found in my saying that 'pleasure is good' and yet not meaning that 'pleasure' is the same thing as 'good', that pleasure means good, and the good means pleasure. [...] It is a very simple fallacy indeed. When we say that an orange is yellow, we do not think that our statement binds us to hold that 'orange' means nothing else than 'yellow', or that nothing else can be yellow but an orange. [...] Why, then, should it be different with 'good'? Why, if good is good and indefinable, should I be held to deny that pleasure is good? Is there any difficulty in holding both to be true at once? On the contrary, there is no meaning in saying that pleasure is good, unless good is different from pleasure.

George Edward Moore, *Principia Ethica*, chap. I, §12, 1903.

1/ Traduction :

- Etablir un lexique anglais-français comprenant les termes les plus difficiles du texte, puis traduire soigneusement les deux textes en français.

2/ Questions :

- Que veut dire Moore lorsqu'il affirme que le mot « bien » (« *good* ») est indéfinissable ? En quoi le parallèle qu'il fait avec deux autres termes indéfinissables selon lui, « jaune » (« *yellow* ») et « plaisir » (« *pleasure* »), est-il éclairant ?