Moral value: Moore

§6. THE PROJECT. Moore begins by outlining the special philosophical interest in ethics. It is not [58] to give a list of things that are good (casuistry). It is to conduct a conceptual investigation into the idea of 'good'. Moore immediately formulates his own answer: good is indefinable. It cannot be explicated as something else. He also previews the later discussion by rejecting possible explications of good as something pleasant or desired.

§7. SIMPLICITY. Good, Moore will argue, is is a simple entity. You can't dissolve into something [59] more primitive. This unlike a thing like horse that, of course, is composed of some entities standing in relations with each other. Good has no parts, no internal structure.

§8. KINDS OF DEFINITION. Moore says that he's not after a verbal definition. He will not survey the [60] usage of 'good' in English. Instead, he will try to give a 'real definition' in terms of the elements that compose good. In fact, he'll say that there is no such definition, that good is, in this sense, indefinable.

§10. NATURALISTIC FALLACY. Why, actually, should it be that good has no definition? The answer given so far as is that it is simple. But why is *this* so? Moore now says that this is so because good is is an 'object of thought' which enables definitions to be made. It is a condition of the possibility of [61] such definitions.

Another example of such indefinable quality is yellow. You might think that its concept can be [62] decomposed into 'eye stimulations by light waves of a certain length'. But, Moore says, we perceive yellow, not eye stimulations. There can be no reduction of yellow to more basic qualities. All we can say is that all yellow things produce a certain stimulation. There is correlation between two qualities, that is, but no reduction.

Remark 1. The discussion of yellow previews the larger doctrine shared by Moore and Russell about the fundamental, irreducible qualities of 'sense-data'.

The same, Moore says, is with good. Some theorists observed (or claimed to observe) a uniform correlation whereby objects that, for example, are pleasant are also good. They inferred fallaciously that good *is* pleasant, and that the former can be defined through the latter. This is the 'naturalistic [62] fallacy'. Now we can see, if we follow Moore, why it is a fallacy, but is it 'naturalistic'? The reason presumably is that the candidate properties in these fallacious definitions, as understood by their authors, are all natural properties. We also get a hint how Moore thinks about good: it is an irreducible, non-natural property.

Similarly, Moore says that the fallacy is a confusion of good with a natural object. Further, even if [65] good *were* a natural object, identifying it with pleasure would still be a fallacy, though not 'naturalistic'.

§11. FURTHER REFLECTIONS ON THE FALLACY. Moore argues that the position of 'naturalist ethicists' may be reconstructed in two ways. One theorist says that good $= X$, the other says that [63] good $= Y$. Well, perhaps their disagreement is really about whether $X = Y$. But then this entails nothing about the nature of good.

Or perhaps they make observations about how 'good' is used in language. But, Moore exclaims, [64] we are not after how people use certain words! We want to know what is that thing that we are talking about!

Question 2. Reflect on Moore's last complaint further.

In a seemingly unrelated remark, Moore also says that the proposition 'Pleasure is good' is far from [64] trivial. Thus it can't mean 'Pleasure is pleasure'. But it has to mean that, if we wish to define good as pleasure (for example). In other words, 'Pleasure is good' is synthetic, not analytic. So we can't [58] analyse (define) good as pleasure.

§13. The Open Question gambit. If good is not an indefinable simple, then there are two 66 possibilities to consider: that it is a complex of some sort, or that it has no meaning (reality) at all. But suppose you say, 'I take pleasure in slicing people.' Surely I can intelligibly ask, 'Is it good to 67 slice people?' So there is a *further* question about goodness that the statement about pleasures and desires does not necessarily answer. This, Moore thinks, should be a general situation. Whatever analytic equivalence good = X I produce, you can always ask, 'But is X good?'

By the same token, to argue that good is unreal is not an option. Everyone understands the question, 68 'Is X good?' Everyone is 'constantly aware of this notion.'

Question 3. Reflect on the viability of the Open Question gambit.

YSB