

TEXTES SÉANCE 10:

1) *Universalizability*. - According to this new approach the universality of genuine moral rules provides us with a test as to whether or not a given proposed rule is genuinely binding: we look to see whether the rule truly could be universalized, whether it is *universalizable*. The claim, then, is that if we consider a rule that is not, in fact, a valid moral rule, we can discover this fact by seeing that it is not universalizable; the lack of moral validity is demonstrated by the very fact that it cannot be properly universalized. [...] So the *first* thing that we do is to try to imagine that everyone does indeed act upon the rule in question, just as they are required to do.

Shelly Kagan, *Normative Ethics*, 1998.

2) What exactly is it that is supposed to go *wrong* when we try to imagine everyone acting on rules that are not, in fact, valid? The most straightforward suggestion concerning what might go wrong is this: it might simply be *impossible* for everyone to act on the rule in question. The particular universalizability test that would correspond to this proposal is this: if it is literally impossible for everyone to act on a given rule, then that rule is not, in fact, morally valid.

Ibid.

3) This proposal does seem intuitively plausible. But why, exactly, should we believe it? That is, why *must* it be the case that if a rule is genuinely universally valid, then it must be possible for everyone to act on that rule? The most natural defense of this claim, I suppose, is this. There is a plausible and widely held view that “ought implies can”. According to this view, a given agent can be morally required to perform a given act only if the agent can perform the act. [...] Therefore, if it isn’t really possible for everyone to act upon the rule, it can’t truly be the case that everyone ought to act upon: the rule cannot be a universally binding one.

Ibid.

1/ Traduction:

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

2/ Question :

- En quoi le test d’universalisation présenté ici diffère-t-il de la question populaire « Et si tout le monde en faisait autant ? »
- Expliquez l’adage « doit implique peut » (*ought implies can*), autrement dit (en droit civil français) « à l’impossible nul n’est tenu ». Quel usage en est-il fait dans le texte 3 ?