

La critique de Stanley Cavell (1926-)

[*The Claim of Reason, Wittgenstein, Skepticism, Morality and Tragedy*, OUP, 1979, p.295-297]

Texte à préparer :

A fuller analogy with a concept “defined” in the game of baseball would be to imagine someone arguing that he shouldn’t be called out because though he swung at the ball (made the promise) it was an inconvenient pitch ; or because although he swung, (said “I promise”) he hadn’t realized what the situation was, and meant only to bunt, or did it as a joke. Then there is some question whether he is competent, not merely at baseball, but at the form of life called “playing a (competitive) game”. But comparable “defenses” *are, sometimes* competently entered in justifying your not keeping a promise, and never are as part of the concept of playing baseball. This very inexactness in the analogy between games and morality is critically important. [...] The importance of the inexactness in the analogy is this: In competitive games (which excludes, for example, such children’s game as Ring-Around-the-Rosy) what count as a move is settled by the Rule of Play. That is essential to them, common to all. (Did I “look and see” whether that is so? But it is part of the “grammar” of “move in the game” that this should be so.) Part of what I will actually be called “rules” in rulebook [...] will be ways of *settling* whether a given action is to *count as a move* when certain eventualities arise. That such things are settled and known in advance of play by all players is what allows games to be practiced, as well as allows certain persons to do what umpires and referees do, viz., to see whether what is done meets the definite requirements of the relevant moves, and to make this fact known to both sides of the competition. That moral conduct cannot be practiced in that way, that you cannot become a moral champion in that way, and that no one can settle a moral conflict in the way umpires settle conflicts, is essential to the form of life we call morality. It is perfectly true that in learning what a promise is we learn what defenses it is appropriate or competent to enter, and where, should we not keep it. But these are just the defenses we learn in learning to defend any of our conduct which comes to grief : those excuses, explanation, justifications (I will call them, as a whole, *elaboratives*) which make the bulk of moral defense. [...] But then the way the reason is entered is critical to whether it will be acceptable – the tone of voice, the occasion on which it is entered, whether you tried to call the promise off before simply not keeping it (which would *lessen*, not necessarily eradicate, any culpability involved), whether you entered the defense at the earliest opportunity – all of which serve to *acknowledge* your awareness of what it is you have done. Without the expression of that awareness, even the extreme defense is incompetent ; because that defense is, in effect, an apology. And apologies, again, are not “defenses” which are part of the concept of moves in a game.

