

John Langshaw Austin (1911-1960) sur l'importance philosophique de l'étude des excuses

[...] to examine excuses is to examine cases where there has been some abnormality or failure: and as so often, the abnormal will throw light on the normal, will help us to penetrate the blinding veil of ease and obviousness that hides the mechanisms of the natural successful act. It rapidly becomes plain that the breakdowns signalized by the various excuses are of radically different kinds, affecting different parts or stages of the machinery, which the excuses consequently pick out and sort out for us. Further, it emerges that not every slip-up occurs in connection with everything that could be called an 'action', that not every excuse is apt with every verb - far indeed from it: and this provides us with one means of introducing some classification into the vast miscellany of 'actions'. If we classify them according to the particular selection of breakdowns to which each is liable, this should assign them their places in some family group or groups of actions, or in some model of the machinery of acting. In this sort of way, the philosophical study of conduct can get off to a positive fresh start.

“A Plea for Excuses”, (“Plaidoyer pour les excuses”), *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 1956.

N.B : cet article de 1956 est intégralement disponible en ligne.