

Report

Society for Applied Philosophy Short-term Postdoctoral Scholarship Scheme 2021-22

(01 April – 30 September)

I am deeply grateful to be a recipient of the SAP Short-term Postdoctoral Scholarship. The fellowship gave me the opportunity to pursue my (at the time) newly found interest in the philosophy of conspiracy theories (and social philosophy more broadly), while also allowing to apply for longer-term academic positions. The fellowship was also significant for me in terms of affirming my identity and value as a researcher.

The outcomes of my research are the following:

1. I submitted a paper at an academic journal.
Summary: In that paper I argue for a novel way of evaluating and investigating conspiracy theories. Specifically, I argue that certain conspiracies can be deemed as epistemically unwarranted purely in terms of their *genealogy*. This is important because there are cases where the evaluation of a conspiracy theory in terms of its individual claims is extremely difficult (e.g. due to the complexity of those claims). The genealogical method sidesteps this problem. Additionally, a certain genealogical *mindset* can deliver what I call “local generalism”: the view that there are certain *classes* of conspiracy theories which warrant epistemic suspicion in virtue of being conspiracy theories of the appropriate sort (i.e. by involving conspiracies that can all be traced back to the same epistemically problematic source).
2. I drafted a paper (soon to be submitted).
Summary: In that paper I suggest that there are certain ways of approaching conspiracy theories without looking at the fine-grained details of those theories. One of these “top-down” approaches is the genealogical approach sketch above. Another is by appealing to certain highly entrenched philosophical views (such as scientific realism). Philosophical views have the following advantage over scientific views: they are less subject to meta-evidential scepticism (which is warranted when it is suspected that a conspiracy has occurred).
3. The fellowship also gave me the opportunity to work together with my old colleagues from the University of Athens. Together with Vasiliki Polykarpou (now at Panteion University) and Yorgos Karagiannopoulos (now at the University of Amsterdam) we organized an online workshop on the philosophical significance of social movements.
4. We also submitted to a publisher an edited-volume book proposal based on the papers presented on that workshop.
5. Yorgos and I drafted and submitted a paper.
Summary: The paper concerns the *realism/anti-realism* distinction as it applies to social kinds. Roughly, we argue that being an anti-realist about social kind K entails being able to *easily intervene* upon the frame-principles governing K.
6. Yorgos and I drafted a paper (soon to be submitted).
Summary: The paper explores moral epistemology and its relation to the function of social movements. Roughly, we argue that social movements can be understood as involving ways of tracking *moral truths* (in the context of a Cornell-style moral realism).
7. I was able to apply to several academic posts. I was fortunate enough to be offered a postdoctoral position at Tel Aviv University as an Azrieli International Postdoctoral Fellow (start date: late-October).