

Report Narrative

The Society for Applied Philosophy generously awarded me a Short-term Postdoctoral Grant to enable me to develop my ‘non-ideal’ approach to philosophy of language as a methodology for social and political philosophy and to support research into how social media has affected speech act contexts and thus impacted the way we talk with one another. This crucial funding, which came during a difficult moment for me personally and professionally, enabled me to complete and submit two journal articles and one conference paper, and has ultimately led to my obtaining more secure employment.

First, over the course of June and July, I completed an article titled ‘The problem of uptake’ in which I provide a novel reassessment and defense of J.L. Austin’s claim that illocutions require hearer reception to function as illocutions, exploring the implications of this view in different social contexts (especially, in relation to cases of sexual harassment and assault). This article, which has now been through a ‘revise and resubmit’ process at *Inquiry* (awaiting a final decision), constitutes an important tranche of my research profile and my attempts to rehabilitate the methodology of OLP.

Second, later in the summer, the grant enabled me to complete a second paper (which has received a revise and resubmit at *Ethics*) in which I interrogate the notion of ‘epistemic bad luck’. The aim of that paper is to show that, contrary to Fricker’s influential account, the distinction between epistemic bad luck and epistemic injustice—as a distinction, respectively, between accidental and innocent harms and blameworthy harms—is ideological rather than conceptual. I argue that we need to widen our conception of epistemic harm beyond credibility deflation—to include the different kinds of abuse that speakers producing different kinds of speech act can suffer, which I argue span exclusion, disregard, misjudgment, and appropriation. I am still working on revisions to this paper.

Third, the grant enabled me to draft a conference paper using insights from Wittgenstein to explore what might be distinctive about social media discourse and the harms perpetrated on such platforms from a speech act perspective. The key argument there is that contextual indeterminacy and context shift raise the prospect of a particular kind of anxiety that may be unique to social media discourse. I was due to present a version of this paper at the “Wittgenstein and Democratic Politics” Seminar at the University of Helsinki in August, but unfortunately I was unable to travel due to Covid. I have now developed a version of this paper into a proposal for a Leverhulme Early Career Fellowship in 2022 (supported by Dr. Rupert Read at the University of East Anglia).

Lastly, I am pleased to report that, with the time afforded by this grant, I was also able to dedicate more energy to job applications. I am pleased to report that I have now secured a postdoctoral fellowship at Georgetown University where I will be helping to research and teach issues in tech ethics and society. I deeply appreciate my time as a Society for Applied Philosophy fellow and would like to sincerely thank the award committee for your support.