

# Theme 2: Silencing, Speaking up & Free Speech

Thursday, 28 January 2021

13:55-14:00	Welcome
14:00-15:00	<b>Alessandra Tanesini:</b> Anger as a speech act and its illocutionary disablement (1pm GMT) <i>10 min break</i>
15:10-16:10	<b>Bianca Cepollaro:</b> Remedies to discriminatory contents: on and offline counterspeech <i>10 min break</i>
16:20-17:20	<b>Saray Ayala-López:</b> Contestation and Resistance
17:30-18:30	<b>Elisabeth Camp:</b> Just Kidding: Sarcasm, Jokes and Willful Deniability in Speech (11:30 am EST) <i>10 min break</i>
18:40-19:40	<b>Sanford Goldberg:</b> How Silence Sometimes "Speaks" (12:40 pm CST) <i>10 min break</i>
19:40-20:40	Optional round-table discussion

Friday, 29 January 2021

14:55-15:00	Welcome
15:00-16:00	<b>Robert Simpson:</b> Heckling, Free Speech, and Free Association (2 pm GMT) <i>10 min break</i>
16:10-17:10	<b>Rae Langton:</b> Free speech as the empowerment of speech acts (3:10 pm GMT) <i>10 min break</i>
17:20-18:20	<b>Ishani Maitra:</b> Linguistic injustice, or, What's wrong with silencing others? (10:20 am EST)
18:30-19:30	<b>David Beaver &amp; Jason Stanley</b> TBA (11:30 am CST — 12:30 pm EST)
19:30-20:30	Optional round-table discussion

## ABSTRACTS: DAY 1

### **Anger as a speech act and its illocutionary disablement**

ALESSANDRA TANESINI (Cardiff University)

2:00 pm CET — 1 pm GMT

In this talk I argue that agential anger is a quasi-speech act whose illocutionary force is that of a verdictive and an exercitive. I show that calls for civility, tone policing and related practices often are tantamount to forms of illocutionary disablement. I conclude that the systematic disabling of apt anger constitutes an example of claimant injustice (Carbonell, 2019).

Carbonell, V. (2019). Social Constraints On Moral Address. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 98(1), 167-189. doi:10.1111/phpr.12450.

### **Remedies to discriminatory contents: on and offline counterspeech**

BIANCA CEPOLLARO (Università degli Studi di Milano)

3:10 pm CET

In this talk I address the question as to how to prevent discriminatory contents from slipping into the common ground (Lewis 1979), if that is possible. In particular, I focus on the notion of blocking (Langton 2018) and compare different strategies to respond to pejorative speech. I present a qualitative study conducted on Facebook and Twitter on how social network users respond to the use of pejoratives online. My claim is that social network users perform to some extent the job of articulating and rejecting the implicit evaluative content conveyed by pejoratives in order to prevent them from entering into the common ground. However, I shall highlight a few problems having to do with (i) asynchrony, (ii) identity of the user, (iii) isolation, (iv) strategies and effectiveness.

Langton, Rae (2018), Blocking as Counter-Speech, in *Bad words*, edited by David Sosa, 144-164. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Lewis, David (1979), Scorekeeping in a language game, *Journal of philosophical logic*, 8(1), 339-359.

### **Contestation and Resistance**

SARAY AYALA-LÓPEZ (California State University Sacramento)

4:20 pm CET

What does it take to contest social, and in particular linguistic and conceptual, practices (e.g. the meaning of certain words, the use and nature of certain concepts)? I explore this question starting with a distinction between contestation and resistance.

### **Just Kidding: Sarcasm, Jokes and Willful Deniability in Speech**

ELISABETH CAMP (Rutgers University)

5:30 pm CET — 11:20 am EST

In political discourse and personal conversations, speakers often turn to jokes and other forms of indirect speech as a way to preserve 'plausible deniability' about what they meant. Interlocutors typically let them get away with such evasions, even when the speaker's intended meaning is palpably obvious to all parties. I distinguish several species of willfully manipulative speech;

diagnose some common factors that help explain their rhetorical effectiveness; and suggest some ways in which resistant audiences can fight back.

### **How Silence Sometimes "Speaks"**

SANFORD GOLDBERG (Northwestern University)

6:40 pm CET — 12:30 pm CST

In this paper I appeal to Gricean assumptions to explain why in many situations one's silence is taken to signal one's assent. The argument I offer compares favorably to a superficially similar argument offered by Philip Pettit, who (in Pettit 1994) had argued that in free speech regimes silence means assent. My claim, by contrast, focuses not on the silent person herself but on the audience who observes her. I argue that under certain widely-obtaining conditions, audience members are entitled to regard one's silence as indicating one's assent – whether or not one meant as much. I spell this out in terms of an account of a conversational permission audiences have to make the silence-to-assent inference; because this permission rests on assumptions about e.g. the cooperativity of conversations, it is defeasible.

Pettit, P. 1994: "Enfranchising Silence: An Argument for Freedom of Speech." In T. Campbell and W. Sadurski, eds., *Freedom of Communication* (Aldershot: Dartmouth), pp. 45-55.

## ABSTRACTS: DAY 2

### **Heckling, Free Speech, and Free Association**

ROBERT SIMPSON (University College London)

3 pm CET — 2 pm GMT

People sometimes use speech to interfere with other people's speech, as in the case of a heckler sabotaging a lecture with constant verbal interjections. Some people see such interferences as infringing upon free speech. Against this view we argue, with Jeremy Waldron, that where competing speakers in a public forum both have a real interest in speaking there, free speech principles shouldn't give priority to the 'official' speaker. Indeed, given the underlying aims of those principles, the heckler's speech may sometimes deserve priority. However, this analysis gives rise to a significant worry, because there are cases in which heckling clearly seems to infringe upon civil liberties, in a way that seems to justify its suppression. We argue that this is because heckling and the like can infringe upon people's associative liberties. We offer a way of theorizing and approaching policy-making for 'contested speech situations' in light of this, with a focus on contested speech in universities.

### **Free speech as the empowerment of speech acts**

RAE LANGTON (University of Cambridge)

4:10 pm CET — 3:10 pm GMT

Free speech involves the protection and enablement of speech acts that matter. Free speech requires powers to perform certain speech acts. HLA Hart noticed that certain legal rules do not sanction, but instead create powers to e.g. marry or make a will, and he described this as one of the most significant contributions the law makes to our lives. Informal social rules likewise create not only sanctions, but powers, spaces of possibility for doing things with words. The absence or distortion of such enabling rules can silence and disable speech, as surely as any sanction.

## **Linguistic injustice, or, What's wrong with silencing others?**

ISHANI MAITRA (University of Michigan)

5:20 pm CET — 11:20 am EST

Recent work in philosophy has brought to light several ways in which attempts to perform speech acts can go wrong. The phenomena here include illocutionary silencing, ineffability, sincerity silencing, discursive injustice, and much more. In this paper, I consider how speakers are wronged when their speech goes astray in any of these ways, and whether there is a common wrong across this range of cases. I consider two hypotheses about what this wrong might be: first, that it is a variety of epistemic injustice, and second, that it is an unjust failure to perceive the speaker's authority. I argue that neither of these hypotheses succeeds. I then sketch a third hypothesis that connects the wrong with unfair interference with self-determination. I argue that this third hypothesis does better at capturing the wrong involved, and also suggests some directions for future research.

## **TBA**

DAVID BEAVER(University of Texas at Austin) & JASON STANLEY (Yale University)

6.30 pm CET — 11:30 am CST —12:30 pm EST

TBA