

# CONCEPTUAL ENGINEERING

## Online Seminar 2021

### #07 | Rachel Sterken (Hong Kong University) [w/ Jessica Pepp and Eliot Michaelson]

#### On Retweeting

##### Abstract

A small but growing literature in philosophy is devoted to the understanding of a seemingly new communicative action that came with the internet, and with Twitter in particular: the retweet. The spur for this literature is a kind of puzzle in public discourse: on the one hand, there is a tendency to hold people responsible for their retweets, and to blame them for retweeting material considered offensive or otherwise inappropriate. On the other hand, there is a widely shared, if not universally-recognized feeling that, as the well-known disclaimer has it, "A retweet is not an endorsement." But if a retweet is not an endorsement, what is it? And what is wrong with retweeting offensive or misleading tweets? What sort of responsibility do people have for their retweets? Here, we put forward the view that bare, uncommented retweets are best understood along the lines of bare locutionary acts—figuring into various forms of illocution, but being more basic than any of those and, thereby, not directly the appropriate subject of norms. If this is right, the questions we then need to ask are: is this an acceptable way for things to be in the age of social media, in terms of its effects on our collective epistemic environment? If not, then (i) what should we want retweeting to be like and (ii) how can we plausibly nudge things in that direction?

The **Conceptual Engineering Online Seminar** series is co-organized by the Department of Philosophy of the University of Zurich and the Arché Philosophical Research Centre at the University of St Andrews. The meetings take place on zoom every Tuesday at 4-6pm Swiss Time/3-5pm British Time, from September 14 to December 14, 2021 (with 14 sessions in total).

##### Organizers

Manuel Gustavo Isaac  
& Kevin Scharp



##### WEB DETAILS

Zoom meeting ID: 675 8251 8255

Password: CEOS21 (invite link)

YouTube channel: [www.youtube.com/c/ConceptualEngineering](https://www.youtube.com/c/ConceptualEngineering)