

Department of Linguistics and Communication
University of Łódź

PhiLang 2025

**THE NINTH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON
PHILOSOPHY OF LANGUAGE AND LINGUISTICS**
Łódź, 16-18 May 2025

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

EDITED BY
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Department of Linguistics and Communication, Institute of English Studies
University of Łódź

the Ninth International Conference on Philosophy of Language and Linguistics

PhiLang 2025

Łódź, 16-18 May 2025

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Book of Abstracts

edited by

Przemysław Ostalski

Łódź, 2025

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Plenary

Lectures

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SINGULAR PROPOSITIONS AND ABSTRACT INDIVIDUALS

Edward Zalta (cf. Zalta 1989, 2001) has rigorously defended and developed the notion of singular proposition as a structured entity that, in addition to properties, might contain **abstract objects** as constituents. This approach occupies an intermediary position between a radically Russellian (or Kaplanian) view, in which ordinary individuals are ‘trapped’ in propositions, and a Fregean account, which treats propositional content as purely qualitative and extension-determining. Let us call such propositions *quasi-Russellian*. This paper has two primary objectives. First, taking Zalta’s idea as a starting point, I examine its implications for the general theory of mental and linguistic representations. Specifically, I argue—building upon several arguments provided by Zalta—that quasi-Russellian propositions serve as particularly well-suited candidates for the contents of certain mental and linguistic representations. A key aspect of my argument hinges on the compatibility of quasi-Russellian propositions with the following general principle regarding representations (cf. Baylis (1968)):

The Underspecification Principle: All representations are underspecified.

This principle might be illustrated by considering an utterance **u** of the sentence “Magdalena is holding Boris” (or the corresponding thought **t**). Both **u** and **t** remain neutral—i.e., underspecified—with respect to numerous properties of Magdalena, Boris, and the relation of holding. They are true when *any* particular state of affairs that somehow specifies the properties in question holds. While the theory postulating quasi-Russellian propositions is not the only framework consistent with the Underspecification Principle (e.g., possible world account of propositions can also accommodate it), I argue that the quasi-Russellian approach surpasses its competitors when considering the fineness of grain of propositional content.

Second, I explore alternative ways in which the notion of quasi-Russellian propositions can be developed. One such approach, pursued by Zalta, treats quasi-Russellian propositions as secondary significances of sentences—relevant for *de dicto* readings of attitude reports—and as entities responsible for cognitive significance. In doing so, Zalta demonstrates how abstract objects can fulfill theoretical roles traditionally attributed to Fregean senses (cf. Zalta 1988) and modes of presentation (cf. Zalta 2001). A distinctive feature of this theory is its heterogeneity: the class of all propositions includes both Russellian and quasi-Russellian ones, each playing distinct theoretical roles (e.g., quasi-Russellian propositions do not serve as the semantic values of singular sentences outside attitude reports).

An alternative development of the quasi-Russellian framework involves permitting *only* quasi-Russellian singular propositions. To achieve this, I draw upon the notion of

primitive sense (cf. Tichy 1986), a sense that is not composed of other senses and whose reference is not contingent upon empirical facts (ibid., p. 35). Extending Zalta’s general approach, I propose that we consider **primitive abstract objects** corresponding to primitive senses—objects that, for instance, encode possible haecceitas without encoding any other properties. Such primitive abstract objects could serve as constituents of propositional structures. This requires, however, adopting two (somewhat controversial) assumptions: (i) that distinct primitive senses may denote the same individual (or that each object may possess multiple thisnesses), (ii) that in regular (and *de re*) contexts co-referential terms always express the same sense (primitive or not). I conclude by critically examining both assumptions and their implications as well as comparing the proposal to some recent accounts of singular propositions (cf. Ingram (2019), Davidson (2024)).

Keywords: Propositional content, Singular propositions, Direct reference, Abstract object theory, Underspecification

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WHAT DO LARGE LANGUAGE MODELS KNOW ABOUT LANGUAGE?

Despite argumentation being ubiquitous in human interaction, its computational modeling is considered one of the most complex tasks in Natural Language Processing. In this talk I give an overview of recent developments in the field using the latest generation of Large Language Models, focusing on two recent studies that show that the linguistic capabilities in two tasks are perceived to exceed those of humans, namely persuasive essay writing and impersonation. I also showcase the limits of employing language models in argumentation and reasoning, for instance in argument identification and logical fallacy detection. I conclude with a discussion of the challenges that remain.

Keywords: Natural Language Processing, Computational Rhetoric, Large Language Models, Modelling reasoning

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CONTENT-SENSITIVE MECHANISMS: A SYSTEMATIC OVERVIEW

This talk explores the foundational challenge of how cognitive and biological systems respond to meaningful content. Moving beyond traditional mechanistic accounts, I develop a systematic framework that reconciles the apparent tension between constitutive and etiological explanatory strategies in cognitive science. The presentation introduces a novel “correspondence network framework” that conceptualizes semantic information processing as occurring through interconnected infocorrespondence channels. Through analysis of diverse examples—from radio reception to animal signaling systems—I demonstrate that content sensitivity typically involves multiple overlapping channels, varied encoding schemes, and complex information flow that cannot be reduced to simple vehicle-content mappings. This framework reveals why purely constitutive approaches fail to capture the full dynamics of information processing in biological systems, while offering new insights into how representational content achieves causal efficacy. By embracing this more complex understanding of information flow networks, we can move beyond oversimplified computational idealizations and develop richer accounts of how cognitive systems achieve their remarkable sensitivity to meaningful content. The correspondence network approach offers conceptual tools for advancing debates in cognitive science while integrating insights from information theory, evolutionary biology, and philosophy of mind.

Keywords: Content-sensitive mechanisms, Correspondence networks, Information flow, Mechanistic explanation, Philosophy of cognitive science

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PUBLIC ARGUMENTS AND THE MULTIPLE PUBLICS: CHALLENGES FOR THEORY AND PRACTICE

The main characteristics of political argumentation identified by Zarefsky (2008) tell us a great deal about the complexity of public political arguments: Political argumentation lacks time limits, lacks a clear terminus, features a heterogeneous audience, and is characterised by open access. The complexity is yet greater when political argumentation goes public. Today's public sphere is more 'networked' than ever: It is inhabited by countless controversies that often overlap and crisscross, as well as by infinitely multiple publics that converge and diverge one with the other in myriads of alliances and rivalries. The complexity of the practice is not just a challenge for arguers, who have no option but to manoeuvre strategically between different issues and different publics. It is also a challenge for argumentation scholars who strive to develop the theoretical tools that can provide meaningful examination of the design and rational quality of political argumentation (see Mohammed 2016, 2019, 2023, 2025, also Zenker et al. 2023).

In this talk I focus on the challenge of the multiple publics. How do political arguers navigate the complex network of alliances and rivalries when crafting their arguments? How are the different publics considered in the assessment of the argument? In answering these questions, I pay a special attention to the question of disagreement, and I argue that an adequate analysis of public political arguments ought to consider the role that reason-giving plays beyond increasing the audience's adherence to certain theses.

Keywords: Political argumentation, Public discourse, Disagreement, Argument assessment, Strategic maneuvering

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Main

Sessions

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THE ART OF MANUFACTURING TRUTHS

Is language merely a tool for communication, or does it serve as a fundamental structure that shapes human understanding and identity? In postmodernism, language is viewed as a system of symbols that not only reflects our perception of reality but also highlights the significance of interpretation. As a result, language plays a central role in constructing both our understanding of truth and our identities. The connection between language and identity is critical, as it mirrors the individual's place in society. Postmodern thought sees language as a fluid, fragmented medium where meaning is unstable and shaped by subjective experience. This perspective challenges the notion of a fixed identity, questioning the self and societal metanarratives. In this context, consumer culture and social media emerge as key forces in the creation of new identities, where consumption becomes a means of self-expression and identity construction. Just as postmodernism deconstructs traditional frameworks of meaning, consumerism allows individuals to redefine themselves through the fluidity of choice and self-presentation, blurring the lines between authenticity and constructed identity. Authors like Paul Auster and Don DeLillo interrogate the notions of knowledge and truth by rejecting absolute meaning or fixed identities, though their approaches to postmodernism differ. This paper aims to explore the postmodernity in the works of Auster and DeLillo, while examining critical theories from Jacques Derrida, Fredric Jameson, and Jean Baudrillard—particularly concepts like *hyperreality*. Additionally, it will delve into the postmodern critique of language, arguing that meaning is not determined by the author, but constructed by the reader within the fluid boundaries of linguistic interpretation

Keywords: Postmodernism, Consumerism, Truth, Language, Identity

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POSSIBILITY-FICTIONALITY ASYMMETRY, NON-TRIVIALITY, AND INTERPRETATIVE ASYMMETRY: DAVID LEWIS ON TRUTH IN (NARRATIVE) FICTION

It seems almost self-evident that narrative works of art tell possible stories. But is it worth taking the concept of the “possible world” *at face value* and claiming that we can account for the “world” of narrative fiction through the concept of possible worlds (as developed in modal semantics)? According to David Lewis’s famous paper, “Truth in fiction” (1978/1983), the answer is yes. In this talk, I will present Lewis’s analysis in detail and argue that we can only fully evaluate its strengths and weaknesses by paying careful attention to two key restrictions that Lewis imposes on theories seeking to account for the intuitive truth conditions of sentences used paratextually (i.e. to report on what goes on in a fiction). His own theory meets both requirement, *Non-triviality* (“the analysis should avoid delineating the range of possible worlds by relying on the concept of ‘truth in fiction’”) and *Possibility-Fictionality Asymmetry* (“the analysis should avoid including the actual world among the relevant possible worlds”), but Lewis pays a heavy theoretical price to satisfy them. The technical solution he employs to ensure their fulfillment ultimately results in the model, in certain cases, misidentifying the range of truths of artistic narrative fictions. Lewis does not address this issue, as he apparently does not consider the *Interpretative Asymmetry* constraint binding (“the analysis must be sensitive to the difference in the nature of the inferences underlying the interpretation of literary texts and other types of narrative texts”). In this presentation, I will show that *Non-triviality* and *Interpretative Asymmetry* cannot be satisfied simultaneously. If we insist on *Non-triviality*, our analysis will fail to adequately capture the specificities of artistic fiction, though the possible-world discourse will still offer some explanatory power—this is the solution Lewis adopts. Conversely, if we prioritize *Interpretative Asymmetry*, the concept of “possible worlds” will not do any real explanatory work in the theory, though the analysis will be sensitive to the unique aspects of literary narratives—this is the path taken by the authors of post-Lewis theories of fiction.

Keywords: David Lewis, Possible World Semantics, Fictional Worlds, Truth in Fiction, Pretence Account of Fiction, Paratextual Uses of Sentences

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IN DEFENSE OF MORAL CONSIDERATIONS IN METASEMANTICS

In this paper, I aim to defend the claim that moral considerations can play a constitutive role in metasemantics, namely, that moral considerations contribute to making it the case that a word has the meaning that it does. My focus is on social externalism.

I propose a revised version of social externalism in which the “experts” who influence meaning determination are epistemic authorities on the term, rather than individuals who persuade the linguistic community about the term’s meaning (as in Burge 1979; 1986). I claim that this version is morally superior because, with socially significant terms (e.g., ‘marriage’, ‘racism’), the linguistic community is often influenced by dominant voices, while marginalized perspectives are systematically excluded (Engelhardt 2024).

I then argue for this version of social externalism in two ways. First, I demonstrate that moral considerations already influence meaning determination in social externalism and other theories within semantic externalism. I thus show that how meanings are determined already depends on implicit beliefs about what ought to be the case. Second, I defend the claim that the truth of a particular version of social externalism can depend on moral facts. To illustrate this, I construct a counterfactual scenario where people have the kind of dispositions that indicate that they treat moral considerations as having referential properties. I use this to show the plausibility of moral considerations playing this kind of constitutive role in meaning determination. Additionally, I draw on feminist philosophy of science (Anderson 1995) to argue that incorporating moral and political values into theory selection is both legitimate and desirable, as theories can be evaluated based on moral and political standards.

In conclusion, I aim to show that moral considerations are not merely extrinsic to metasemantics, but can play a role in how meanings are determined, particularly for socially significant terms.

Keywords: Metasemantics, Feminist philosophy of language, Social externalism, Normativity, Semantic externalism

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BULLSHIT AND CONVERSATION

In his seminal essay Harry Frankfurt argued that bullshit is “mere vapor”. Bullshit utterances are “empty, without substance or content” (Frankfurt, 1988, 127). But what does this mean? It can mean neither that these utterances have no semantic content, nor that they are fake assertions with no assertoric content, nor that they communicate contents already in the common ground. Yet it *is* plausible to think of bullshit as empty. The formula I propose to examine is this:

An utterance U is empty relative to the context c iff one of the following holds:

- [A] The evolution of c isn’t supposed to depend on the truth of P expressed in U .
- [B] U has a direct effect on the hearer H such that the response of H in c doesn’t depend on the truth of P .

The situation [A] is meant to model Frankfurt’s “bull sessions”. U is empty because of the global properties of c : it is part of the common ground already prior to U that utterances are not accepted or rejected because of their truth value.

In the situation [B], U is made in an ostensibly “truth-sensitive” context where the participants generally assume that utterances are to be scrutinised for their truth value. The evolution of c does depend on the truth value of the utterances made. However, U has special features that disrupt the normal evolution of c and disengage it from truth scrutiny. It is designed to make H *bypass* the rational scrutiny of P . H is expected to approve U on the basis of factors other than P ’s truth.

I show that Frankfurt’s own and later theorists’ examples of bullshit fit well the situation [B]. I conclude by arguing that this approach enables us to unify Frankfurt’s and Jerry Cohen’s accounts of bullshit.

Keywords: Bullshit, Truth, Context, Rationality, Manipulation

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“IS IT JUST A JOKE?” HUMOR AND RESPONSIBILITY IN SPEECH ACTS

One of the focal points of speech act theory has been understanding the mechanisms behind failed comedy, particularly when a comedian’s attempt at humor is met with misunderstanding or rejection. While much attention has been given to instances where jokes fail to elicit laughter, this paper focuses on more contentious scenarios—those in which jokes provoke offense and compel the comedian to justify their intent.

This issue is highly relevant in the context of contemporary cancel culture and revisits a classical question in pragmatics: Is the speaker’s intent sufficient for an utterance to succeed as a speech act in the way it is intended? Why, then, are apologies that follow the formula “I didn’t mean to offend, it was just a joke” often deemed inadequate by many?

In this paper, I argue for an externalist position on failed comedy, drawing on Marina Sbisa’s neo-Austinian distinction between uptake as understanding and uptake as acceptance. To develop this argument, I analyze the controversy surrounding British comedian Ricky Gervais, particularly his remarks about the trans community in 2016 and his subsequent statements in a 2019 interview with *The Spectator*. I explore the interplay between intention, reception, and the comedian’s social position, extending Austin’s original rule on who is entitled to perform specific speech acts and incorporating insights from feminist speech act theory.

By integrating these theoretical perspectives and examining this case study, the paper offers a nuanced account of comedic offense and its pragmatic dimensions, highlighting the ethical and contextual considerations that arise in an age of heightened cultural sensitivity.

Keywords: Externalism, Intentions, Uptake, Speech Acts, Apologies, Failed Humor

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GENERICIS AND HERMENEUTICAL INJUSTICE

In this talk, I argue that a specific link connects *genericis* and *hermeneutical injustice*. According to Fricker (2007), hermeneutical injustice occurs when the collective understanding cannot make sense of a significant area of one's social experience due to a conceptual gap in our collective hermeneutical resource. I contend that a given way of reasoning about genericis concerning social categories, like (1), constitutes a distinctive cause of this injustice:

- (1) Girls are bad at math.

Specifically, I focus on how genericis and two opposed forms of reasoning shape our causal inferences about social categories: *internalist reasoning* (i.e., essentialist or inherent reasoning; e.g., Gelman 2003 and Cimpian & Salomon 2014) and *structural reasoning* (Haslanger 2016), a form of externalist reasoning.

On an internalist construal, the association between being members of category K and having property F is seen as the result of inherent and deep characteristics of the members of K; under this perspective, the connection expressed by (1) is due to how girls are made. On a structural construal, instead, the same association is seen as the result of stable external constraints acting on the relevant category members by virtue of their position within the larger hierarchy of a social structure; under this perspective, the connection expressed by (1) is due to distinctive social barriers that girls face. For this reason, Vasilyeva and Ayala-Lopez (2019) proposed that prompting structural reasoning might allow using genericis to reduce hermeneutical injustice. However, while appropriate prompting favors a structural interpretation of genericis, empirical evidence indicates that their internalist interpretation is favored by default (e.g., Vasilyeva & Lombrozo 2020). Given the default character of their internalist interpretation, I argue that genericis might foster hermeneutical injustice in contexts where both internalist and structural reasons are provided and that this constitutes a distinctive cause of hermeneutical injustice.

Keywords: Genericis, Hermeneutical injustice, Internalist reasoning, Structural reasoning, Social categories

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THEORIZING WITH AND WITHOUT BAGGAGE: UPSHOTS OF A NEGLECTED DISTINCTION

Theorizing about concepts is a common activity in many subfields of philosophy. In social philosophy, we sometimes ask how we *should* use and understand a concept in order to best achieve our social and political goals. In metaphysics, we sometimes talk about conceptual objectivity – whether there are some concepts which really carve the world at its joints. In this paper, I make a distinction between two ways of theorizing about concepts: 1) as normatively-laden and 2) as normatively-inert. The distinction reflects the *saliency* of a concept’s *practical-normative role* in our theorizing, where a practical-normative role is defined as the role the concept plays in our lives and normative consequences of its doing so. When we theorize about a concept as normatively-laden, we think about it as carrying a kind of normative “baggage”; that is, we focus our theorizing – our search for what is true of it – around an analysis of the practical role it plays and the resulting consequences of different accounts we could give. When we theorize about a concept as normatively inert, we give it a purely extensional definition, leaving open a further question about *alternative concepts*. Namely, a question about which of adjacent purely extensional concepts is privileged in relation to a particular practical-normative role. Different ways of theorizing are predominant in different areas of philosophical discourse. I contend that failing to take this distinction into account has led to (at least) two mistakes in the recent literature: one about the ambitions of realism (in debates between Shamik Dasgupta and Ted Sider) and one about the novelty of the threats posed by alternative normative concepts in metaethics (most notably in Matti Eklund’s *Choosing Normative Concepts*).

Keywords: Concepts, Theorizing, Normativity, Practical-role, Realism, Alternative normative concepts

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ILLOCUTIONARY SILENCING AND ILLOCUTIONARY HARM

According to Rae Langton, the ability to speak is a distinctive feature of a human being (Langton, 2009). Ability to perform speech acts is a measure of political power (Langton, 1993). Yet, it is possible to silence one's speech (Langton, 2009). Langton distinguishes three types of silencing: locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary silencing (Langton, 2009), but focuses mainly on the last one understood as disabling the speaker from successfully performing their linguistic activities (Langton, 1993). This type of silencing has a direct connection and impact on the normative sphere, enabling certain types of injustice to occur (Langton, 2009). The said injustices take place because the speaker is either not being treated nor perceived as a rightful participant of the speech act, or they are being prevented from achieving intended effects of the speech act. In both cases the speaker is denied their illocutionary potential. Langton adds, that illocutionary silencing is objectifying to a person (or a collective), and thus harmful. The inability to perform speech acts is associated with depriving the speaker of authority, influence and power (Langton, 2009). Marina Sbisà adds that the illocutionary silencing has a very serious and dangerous consequences in moral practices, and thus should be considered as harmful (Sbisà, 2009).

Illocutionary silencing is therefore a gateway to illocutionary harm. I would like to determine what such harm consists of and what its effects would be. I argue that illocutionary harm damages both the silenced as well as the suppressors. I believe, that there is a close relation between illocutionary silencing, illocutionary harm and epistemic injustice (Fricker, 2007). I would also like to reach for contributions by Kukla (Kukla, 2014) and Hesni (Hesni, 2018), whose alternative definitions of illocutionary silencing expand our understanding of the harm performed within the illocutionary sphere.

Keywords: Illocutionary silencing, Illocutionary harm, Speech act, Objectification, Epistemic injustice

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NATURAL LANGUAGE ONTOLOGY: QUINE AND THE LINGUISTIC INTUITIONS IMPLICIT IN HIS ONTOLOGICAL COMMITMENTS

Natural language ontology is a budding discipline within the field of descriptive metaphysics. The latter's aim it is to "describe the actual structure of our thought about the world" whereas the former specifically seeks to describe the ontology/ontologies of natural language in order to achieve the latter's aim (Strawson 1959). It follows that natural language ontology is composed both of metaphysics and linguistics (Moltmann 2019). Its main interests are the "linguistic intuitions" of a linguistic community. They form the core of language and are what any fluent speaker of a language implicitly accepts when using language.

My research applies the methodology of this new field to the study of philosophy itself. I argue that I can link linguistic intuitions of a given language to "matters of course" implicit in the ontology of philosophers of that language. I propose to present this method with my work on W.V. Quine's ontology. To do so I explore, firstly, the grammar of English verbs, relying on research carried out by linguists and grammarians. Secondly, I compare this grammar to the implicit ontology in Quine's philosophy, that is, to his unexplicit ontological commitments. The linguistic research focuses on the passive and active voices of the verb *to be*, the indicative mood, the modal auxiliary *will*, and the relation between the conditional mood and modal verbs. Likewise, there are four pillars in the analysis of Quine's ontology: the world as comprised of things and states of things, the dependency of being on things, the future as a present attitude, and the conditional as an expression of the mind. I conclude the core of these pillars in Quine's ontology can be connected to English linguistic intuitions, and suggest that the same links can be made in more of English-language philosophy.

Keywords: Natural language ontology, Descriptive metaphysics, Linguistics, Quine, Philosophy of language, Linguistic intuitions

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SEMANTIC PLASTICITY OF ‘PERSON’

The words we use are semantically plastic: their reference could easily have been slightly different (had we used the language slightly differently). Semantic plasticity is the core commitment of the epistemic theory of vagueness (Williamson 1994), but it also has independent support as a linguistic phenomenon (Dorr & Hawthorne 2014). One of the most puzzling cases of semantic plasticity regards the case of ‘person’. Suppose that a close linguistic community uses the term ‘person’ slightly differently, e.g. so that some speck of dust counts as a part of David on their usage, but not on ours. When David, who is a member of that community, utters the sentence ‘I am a person’, his term ‘person’ does not refer to a person (but rather to a fusion of a person with a speck of dust). Consequently, either David is not referring to himself (a person), when he is using the term ‘I’, or his utterance ‘I am a person’ is false.

This result poses several problems. Firstly, it’s hard to believe that ‘I’ could easily not have been used for self-reference or that we might easily be wrong about being persons. Secondly, plasticity of ‘person’ seems to come at a cost of seriously revising our moral theories. For instance, if we should care about the survival of persons significantly more than about the survival of non-persons, people in David’s community are making a serious moral error as they care about the survival of *persons* * (whatever their term ‘person’ refers to) and not *persons*.

My goal is to present a theory of semantic plasticity of ‘person’ that retains the standard semantics for indexicals and avoids attributing moral errors to nearby linguistic communities at the cost of endorsing serious moral vagueness (the view that even deontic moral properties like ‘wrong’ are vague).

Keywords: Semantic Plasticity, Vagueness, Modal Variation, Epistemicism, Personal Identity, Personhood, Indexicals

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ON THE SEMANTIC-SYNTACTIC INTERPRETATION OF STRUCTURES WITH SUBJECT-ORIENTED EVALUATIVE ADVERBS (IN POLISH AND ENGLISH)

I address the issue of the semantic-syntactic characteristics of evaluative adverbs, based on Polish and English examples, such as *sprawiedliwie/niesprawiedliwie* – *justly/unjustly* or *maźrze/niemaźrze* – *wisely/foolishly*. Polish grammatical compendia usually suggest that the position of adverbs in the sentence structure and their prosodic features have no semantic significance, which distinguishes adverbs from metatextual particles, sensitive to word order and prosody. Contrary to that, in English-language research – which, due to the inflexivity of this language, traditionally focuses on the semantic aspects of word order – two types of structures are typically distinguished, i.e. ad-sentential vs manner; mostly, such adverbs themselves are treated as polysemous, with strictly defined word order for each meaning (except for the middle position possible for both).

I argue that the expressions in question, like other subject-oriented adverbs, form a kind of intermediate class, that is, on the one hand, they retain basic adverbial features and, with a few exceptions, do not systematically transfer to the metatextual plane, but on the other hand, they are sensitive to prosody, inextricably related to the communicative organisation of the sentence (and therefore also to the word order, as one of its exponents); more precisely, like particles, they are speaker's comments on what is contained in the rheme, being themselves part of the theme. That means that the number of possible interpretations of such structures actually depends on the number of rhematisable components of the sentence (words or larger phrases), and is not limited to two. One additional reading, i.e. manner, in which the adverb is rhematic, is interpreted as a result of the metonymic shift. Following structural-semantics methods and referring to corpus data, I try to identify basic syntactic-semantic formulas corresponding to these variants, along with the prosodic-communicative patterns associated with them. I also present, on the one hand, the most characteristic syntactic and lexical markers indicating particular readings, and on the other, I deal with the problem of potential ambiguity in sentences with the same word order and prosody.

Keywords: Communicative structure, Evaluative adverbs, Prosody, Semantics, Subject-oriented adverbs, Theme vs rheme, Word order

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MODAL NORMATIVISM: HOW SEMANTIC RULES UNLOCK MODAL KNOWLEDGE

Contemporary epistemology of modality struggles with fundamental issues concerning the foundations of modal knowledge. Traditional theories of modality often postulate the existence of a “modal facts” or “possible worlds”. As a result, they carry significant ontological burdens and generate difficulties regarding epistemic access to modal truths. Amie Thomasson argues that the core mistake of traditional theories is treating modal language as a description of reality's features. Instead, she claims that modal discourse serves a normative function, expressing semantic rules that govern our use of language. An example is the necessity statement “Necessarily, all bachelors are unmarried,” which reflects the linguistic rule: “One ought to use the term ‘bachelor’ only for individuals who are unmarried.” The framework she develops is known as modal normativism.

Modal normativism radically changes the way we understand the epistemology of modality. According to Thomasson, modal knowledge is grounded in semantic competence, understanding and the proper application of the semantic rules.

In my presentation, I aim to discuss modal normativism as a response to the challenges faced by the epistemology of modality. I plan to explore how linguistic competencies and semantic rules form the foundation of modal knowledge and how modal normativism addresses the challenges that have traditionally confronted modal theories. I also intend to highlight the problems faced by proponents of modal normativism and attempt to provide answers to some of these difficulties. Ultimately, my goal is to examine these issues and propose solutions based on Thomasson’s proposals as well as alternative interpretations of modality. I hope to demonstrate the potential of modal normativism as a tool for demystifying the epistemology of modality, while also pointing out its limitations that require further work and reflection.

Keywords: Modal normativism, Epistemology of modality, Modal knowledge, Thomasson, Semantic modality, Metaphysical modality

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CLOSER TO NATURAL LANGUAGE

When studying natural languages, we generally use formal languages which allow for the application of formal machinery. However, in order for the formal tools to allow us to draw conclusions about the natural languages, we need to ensure that the formal languages fit. Put differently, we should aim for a close representation of natural languages. For example, if the formal language is remote from the represented natural language, any formal results about the formal language cannot be immediately applied to the natural language under consideration. It is also clear, though, that certain differences do not hinder the application of potential results about the formal languages to natural languages. To understand when formal languages allow us to learn something about natural languages, we need a notion of closeness; we need to answer the question when a formal language is close to a natural language, and, more generally, when a formal language is closer to a (natural) language than another language. In this paper, we consider several explications of this closeness-relation.

One such explication is to consider which arguments the distinct languages validate: propositional languages help account for certain inference patterns such as concluding from ‘The table is brown and sturdy’ that ‘The table is sturdy’, but we get more inference patterns if we introduce more structure as is done in a predicate language by introducing additional syntactic elements.

Whether this additional syntax is itself close to the natural language under consideration is then another question, which gives rise to another explication of the closeness-relation. For example, even though predicate-languages capture much of the inference-patterns of natural languages, they syntactically differ from them as well. Consider, e.g., a sentence like ‘All human beings are mortal’, whose representation introduces variables and connectives which don't occur in the natural language syntax.

Keywords: Natural Language, Formal Language, Closeness, Logic, Explication

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**DAVIDSON'S SEMANTIC ARGUMENT THAT ACTIONS ARE EVENTS:
A CROSS-LINGUISTIC CHALLENGE**

Donald Davidson famously argues that actions constitute a subclass of events by employing first-order predicate logic to analyse English action sentences. While this argument has profoundly influenced the philosophy of action and related fields, it relies on the often-overlooked assumption that linguistic analysis as a metaphysical method can be conducted by focusing on just one language or language family (i.e., in this case, English or the Indo-European language family). This assumption implies that if Davidson's argument cannot be reproduced in other languages, its conclusion as a metaphysical claim is untenable. This paper demonstrates that Davidson's argument fails to replicate in Chinese because Chinese (i) does not rely on the subject-predicate structure, (ii) is non-inflectional, and (iii) requires classifiers for quantification. A broader implication of this cross-linguistic challenge is the need to acknowledge and address the risk of 'English parochialism' in philosophical inquiry.

Keywords: Davidson's semantic argument, Cross-linguistic perspective, The subject-predicate structure, Non-inflectional language, Noun classifiers, English parochialism

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HEGEL'S AND CARNAP'S INFERENTIALISM AND ITS RELATION TO CONCEPTUAL ENGINEERING

Inferentialism is a theory of meaning that has gained increasing interest in recent years. One of its most interesting applications is the application of inferentialism in conceptual engineering. The historical development of inferentialism is often presented as having its origins in Hegel and Carnap and leading through Sellars to Brandom. We can say that both Hegel and Carnap are the precursors of inferentialism, however there is no literature about connections between these two philosophers.

In my talk I compare Hegelian and Carnapian inferentialism in order to fill the mentioned gap. To achieve this, I reconstruct Hegel's theory of meaning from the *Science of Logic* (1969). Then I compare it to Carnap's theory of meaning from *Meaning and Necessity* (1947).

The purpose of my talk is twofold. First, I show similarity in the understanding of language by two seemingly unrelated philosophers - Hegel and Carnap. Second, my considerations aim to show links between inferentialism and conceptual engineering in general. Both Hegel and Carnap combined their versions of inferentialism with revisionist metaphilosophical views which are shared by today's conceptual engineering approach. I argue that there is no coincidence in fact that nowadays neo-carnapists are usually interested in both normativism and inferentialism (Thomasson forthcoming). This leads us to the conclusion that what is happening in philosophy now can be viewed as “discovering” the similarities linking Hegel and Carnap, making them patrons of a new philosophical trend.

Keywords: Inferentialism, Hegel, Carnap, Meaning, Conceptual engineering

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A SPEECH-ACT THEORY OF BAPTISMS

Suppose a simple causal theory of utterances of proper names is true. Then the reference mechanism has two parts: *baptisms*, when a name is bestowed upon an object, and *borrowing*, where later tokens of that name refer to that object because they are related to the baptism. Almost all work on causal theories has focused on the inheritance relation, and work on baptisms has been mostly concerned with their *extrinsic* features, giving no account of what baptisms *are*.

It might seem a platitude that a baptism is (1) a particular speech act, (2) involving a use or mention of the relevant name. This accords with general intuitions and paradigm cases across this literature. I first present a series of examples to show that neither 1 nor 2 is necessary, and that baptisms come in a much greater variety than previously imagined. I consider two kinds of classic case (simple descriptive/demonstrative dubbings as in Kripke (1980), and 'switching' cases with an unintentional baptism, as in Evans' (1973)) as well as intentional variants of the Madagascar case ('sustained-use' cases) and cases where names are intentionally selected in unusual ways (by spelling, demonstrating a name on a list, etc.).

I then offer a theory of baptisms to account for this variety. A baptism is an act (perhaps, though not necessarily, a single speech act) which includes some utterance(s) which the speaker intends to refer to some object, *and* some utterances which 'specify' a term which the speaker intends to refer to that object. This term 'specified' term is either the one the speaker persistently uses (as in Evans' 'Madagascar') case, or the one they mention, demonstrate, describe, etc., intending projected later uses of it to refer to the object. This accounts for all the relevant cases.

Keywords: Reference, Causal-theory, Speech-act, Demonstration, Description, Reference-switch

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INFERENCEALIST SEMANTICS FOR GENDERED PEJORATIVES

Lauren Ashwell (2016) argues that gendered pejoratives such as *slut* or *sissy* do not have neutral counterparts (a condition often assumed for racial and ethnic slurs), i.e. non-offensive ways of referring to the same target group. That is because it is impossible to define a co-extensive term without buying into the sexist ideology in which such pejoratives find support and its associated normative expectations. While compelling, Ashwell's argument generates a problem for the semantics of such terms akin to the Emptiness Puzzle formulated for so-called objectionable thick terms by Eklund (2011): gendered pejoratives appear to have no determinate reference, but they are used referentially and understood as such.

In this paper I will propose to treat gendered pejoratives on the model of inferentialist semantics for slurs as suggested by Dummett (1973) and Brandom (1994). This model, involving objectionable inferences, is inadequate for paradigmatic slurs on the neutral counterpart assumption (cf. Williamson 2009), but I argue it works well for gendered slurs, and possibly for a broader range of ideologically distorted expressions. The crucial issue is that of determining reference. The inferentialist model can incorporate the dependence of reference on ideology: words such as *slut* or *lewd* only appear to have a determinate extension if one accepts their normative presuppositions. Technically, this is accounted for by a requirement that reference be determined by *harmonious* introduction and elimination rules, i.e. ones which license an inference which can be endorsed. What inferences are taken to be endorsable, in turn, may be a contested ideological issue. In other words, the semantics of gendered pejoratives are distorted by ideology: certain normative assumptions concerning sexuality support spurious inferential links between reference and evaluation. In conclusion I discuss some possible extensions of this model to a broader range of expressions, e.g. the use of *woke* in right-wing discourse.

Keywords: Gendered slurs, Ideology, Inferentialism, Pejoratives, Reference

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ARTIFICIAL SPEAKERS

Philosophers are now considering whether chatbots, artificial intelligences based on large language models, are language users. I distinguish four questions:

- Can chatbots say things?
- Can chatbots mean things?
- Can chatbots assert things?
- Are the outputs of chatbots meaningful?

I propose a minimal account of saying, following Grice. I do so by first claiming that the outputs of chatbots are meaningful: they have semantic contents. I appeal to the externalist tradition and its application to chatbots in the current literature in support of that claim. According to the minimal account of saying, producing a meaningful sentence is sufficient for saying the semantic content of that sentence.

I support my argument with a principle of rejecting double standards. I apply this to arguments which rely on a premise of the form: if chatbots cannot do X/are not X, then they cannot do Y/are not Y. We should accept such a premise only if we would also accept the equivalent premise about humans.

I describe cases where a human has said something despite lacking an intention to say it, or an intention to say anything. In those cases, it is sufficient for the human to have produced a meaningful sentence. I conclude from this that it would be a double standard to claim that this is not sufficient for a chatbot to have said something.

One important feature of the minimal account of saying is that it, unlike meaning, does not require chatbots to have intentions, beliefs, or desires. My conclusion that chatbots can say things does not entail that chatbots are human like agents. Clarity on this point is an important benefit of carefully distinguishing the four questions in the way that I do.

Keywords: Saying, Meaning, Asserting, Meaningfulness, AI, Large language models

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A PRAGMATIC TREATMENT OF INQUISITIVE SEMANTICS

Inquisitive Semantics (cf. Ciardelli et al. 2018) is a powerful formal apparatus, designed mainly to formalise the idea that a conversation is not simply an exchange of information, but rather a game of raising and resolving issues. Most of the implementations are rather straightforward -- questions are used to raise issues, and hence are inquisitive, and assertions are used to resolve issues, hence are informative. Moreover, as Groenendijk (2007) emphasises, the notion of questions and assertion has nothing to do with illocutionary force of a speech act, as it is purely a semantic concept.

In my talk, I propose to go against Groenendijk's claim and show how the notion of inquisitive content can be applied to other phenomena in natural language, specifically -- ambiguity. The idea that not only questions can be said to have inquisitive content is not novel, as in some implementations of Inquisitive Semantics disjunctions can also be treated as inquisitive (e.g. Groenendijk 2007). In my talk I will show that there are striking formal similarities between ambiguous constructions and questions, which suggests that they could be formally represented in a similar way.

The issue that emerges, and that has led some theorists to abandon treating disjunctions as inquisitive too, is how to then differentiate between questions and ambiguity (or questions and disjunctions), as they are different parts of language that serve different purposes. Here is where I propose to put pragmatics back into semantics, and use Perry's (2001) multipropositionalism and Frege's (1918) idea of a force of an utterance in order to allow for the differentiation between questions and ambiguity, while maintaining the claim that they are structurally similar.

Keywords: Inquisitive Semantics, Ambiguity, Questions, Disjunction, Pragmatics, Force, Multipropositionalism

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“HE’S SO BABYGIRL” – PRAGMATICS OF GENDERED EXPRESSIONS IN SLANG

In this talk I conduct a pragmatic analysis of utterances involving gendered expressions, focusing on innovative uses of gendered terms in slang.

Conceptual gender pertains to gender-specific terms that include natural kind terms (“man”, “woman”, “boy”, “girl”), kinship terms (“mother”, “brother”) and role names (“actress”, “chairman”). Following Ackerman, who defines conceptual gender as “the gender that is expressed, inferred, and used by a perceiver to classify a referent” (2019, 3), I use the term conceptual gender to encompass notions aligning with natural or notional gender, definitional gender, and semantic gender in linguistic literature. These terms refer to ways of associating lexical items with masculine or feminine properties without necessarily attributing formal features to them. For example, saying “Alex is my mother” entails that Alex is a woman because “mother” means “female parent”. Conceptual gender entails the information about the referent’s gender because the gender component is a part of the meaning of the term.

However, gendered terms are often used in slang where the gender of the referent differs from the conceptual gender of the term. The examples include the use of “mother” and “mothering” in queer slang (loosely meaning “a feminine icon”) which is applicable to people of any gender, and the word “babygirl” which is a popular online term of endearment and is often applied to middle-aged men. I take such usages to be instances of local linguistic innovation where a new linguistic practice emerges and becomes conventionalised in a linguistic community. While typically using gendered terms informs the audience about the referent’s gender, sentences like “Billy Porter is mothering” or “Kendall Roy is so babygirl” can be felicitously uttered and not elicit false inferences (that the referents are women).

Keywords: Conceptual gender, Gendered language, Pragmatics, Slang, Linguistic innovation

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INFERENTIALISM AND DIVISION OF LINGUISTIC LABOUR

In a series of highly influential works, Putnam and Burge have argued for the thesis of the *division of linguistic labour*. Due to division of linguistic labour, it is possible to identify a term's meaning. I am not a chemist nor a botanist and my knowledge of chemical substances and plants is limited, so I cannot distinguish the referents of "tellurium" or "beech". In my use of such terms, I defer to the relevant experts. So far, so good. But which terms are subject to the division of linguistic labour? This issue is understudied. I demonstrate that the most obvious answers "natural kind terms" or "scientific terms" are too narrow and I present an alternative solution by appealing to inferentialist semantics (a view that linguistic meaning of an expression is identical with its inferential role, which is determined by inferential rules). I propose an alternative solution: "specialist terms" are subject to division of linguistic labour. But which terms are specialist? I propose that the criterion for delimiting "specialist" terms that are subject to a division of linguistic labour is **(Grasp Asymmetry)**: terms for which *an asymmetry concerning the basic grasp of meaning* of a disputed term arises in the game of giving and asking for reasons. When **(Grasp Asymmetry)** is treated as the criterion for distinguishing terms which are subject to a division of linguistic labour, and is applied to the array of cases discussed above, it seems to give very intuitive results. It classifies "boson", "Salchow jump", "Western Forehand Grip", and "transistor" as specialist terms, and it classifies "fork", "spork", "car", and "bulb" as ordinary terms that are not subject to the division of linguistic labour.

Keywords: Normative inferentialism, Social externalism, Division of linguistic labour, Natural kind terms, Specialised discourses

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NORMS OF EVALUATIVES

It is widely believed that different types of speech acts are governed by different norms. In particular, there is an entire industry devoted to identifying the norm(s) of the speech act of assertion which has produced numerous candidates for such a norm: the knowledge norm, the belief norm, the justification norm and others. A number of other speech act types are supposed to have their norms, e.g. asking a question, explaining, telling, etc.

In this talk I try to identify possible norms of evaluative speech acts (be them assertions or some other speech act types), that is such speech acts which are typically performed using subjective evaluative predicates in sentences like: “Tax evasion is wrong” or “Sauerkraut tasty”. It seems that arguments concerning conditions of felicity of evaluative speech acts (and thus possibly concerning plausible norms thereof) are scattered across different debates. In connection with the so-called moral assertions, the norms of moral understanding (Kelp 2020) and the explanation proffering norm (Simion 2018) have been proposed. In connection with predicates of personal taste it’s been argued (i.a. MacFarlane 2014, Kennedy & Willer 2022) that a normal use of words like “tasty” carries a familiarity inference, i.e. that the speaker has experienced the object they are talking about in the relevant way. Finally, hybrid expressivist theories claim that uttering a taste claim typically means expressing an attitude of liking or disliking something.

The aim of my talk is explore the possibility of identifying a common (set of) norm(s) of evaluative speech acts.

Keywords: Norms of assertion, Norms of speech acts, PPTs, Subjectivity, Evaluatives

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THE PRINCIPLES OF TELEOLOGICAL HOLISM

In the paper, I present the outline of Teleological Holism (TH). TH is the result of an attempt to find a golden mean between interpretationistic and productivistic metasemantics.

TH aligns with holistic paradigm, which posits that meaning is originally ascribed to language as a whole, while the meanings of individual expressions are determined as elements of this overarching totality. The fundamental innovation introduced in TH lies in its teleological nature. It assumes that the semantic field attributed to language as a whole is governed by rules oriented toward a specific goal. It is proposed that this goal is the *utility of beliefs*. The degree of utility of a belief is determined by the causal relations between the language user and the external world (general principle: the shorter the causal distance between the user and the segment of the world the speaker intends to refer to, the greater the utility of the belief constructed on the basis of this causal relation). The universal semantic rule determining the referents of expressions is the principle of maximizing useful knowledge, which states that referents should be assigned to words in such a way as to maximize the number of useful beliefs.

Interpretationistic aspect of TH is reflected in the holistic thesis and the principle of maximizing useful knowledge: the expression “w” refers to the object X because the belief “...w...” is more useful when it concerns X rather than an object other than X. On the other hand, the productivistic aspect of TH lies in the rejection of the purely interpretationistic claim that the reference of “w” is determined independently of the speaker’s intentions and in accordance with some arbitrarily adopted *a priori* principle. Instead, it is interpreted as being produced as a consequence of causal dependencies between the speaker and the world.

Keywords: Meaning, Holism, Metasemantics, Teleological theories, Interpretationism, Productivism

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NAMES ARE NOT TYPE REFERENTIAL

Referentiality is a postulated linguistic or semantic property of certain expressions in natural language. If an expression is directly referential, it can only be used to express a singular proposition. The question I wish to consider concerns the semantics of proper names. Is referentiality an intrinsic characteristic of them? Do proper names differ in this respect from definite descriptions? My discussion will be structured around François Recanati's affirmative responses to these questions.

In his examination of singular terms in “Direct Reference” (1993), François Recanati employs the concept of type and token referentiality to distinguish proper names from definite descriptions. Recanati posits that proper names embody type referentiality, while definite descriptions do not, enabling the treatment of referential uses of definite descriptions as token-referential, and attributive uses as general. This talk challenges Recanati's framework by arguing against the assumed type-referentiality of proper names. Through an exploration of systematic non-referential instances involving proper names, the study contests the prevailing notion that all expressions of this kind necessitate reference. The findings contribute to a nuanced understanding of the varied functions and interpretations associated with proper names in philosophy and linguistics.

Keywords: Proper names, Referentiality, Type-referentiality, Token-referentiality, Definite descriptions

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**THE SILENCE OF THE PHILOSOPHERS OF LANGUAGE:
ABSTRACTION PRINCIPLES AND THE FOUNDATIONS OF LINGUISTICS**

In this talk, I will partially engage with a longstanding debate about the ontological basis of linguistics, i.e., what kind of object a natural language is. Instead of assessing the usual arguments of the two main approaches, Platonism and Naturalism, I will focus on an often-overlooked topic in the philosophy of language: abstraction principles.

Typically, these principles are of great interest to philosophers who adopt a Neo-Fregean approach to the foundations of mathematics and have the following general form: $\S a = \S b \leftrightarrow \Phi(a, b)$, where “ \S ” is an abstraction operator and “ Φ ” is an equivalence relation (Hale&Wright 2001, Fine 2002, Linnebo&Horsten 2016). Abstraction principles like Hume’s Principle and Frege’s Basic Law V establish identity conditions for individuating abstract entities on the left-hand side of the equation, as well as providing a reference for abstract terms. Besides a few exceptions (Schiffer 2003, Moltmann 2013), no one in linguistics addresses the issue of abstraction principles for natural languages. This is surprising, especially considering that, despite all their differences, formalized languages do share many similarities with natural languages.

The talk will be structured as follows: first, I will briefly overview the debate between abstractionist and empirical accounts of language. Second, I will explain the basics of a neo-Fregean account of the foundations of mathematics and the role abstraction principles play in it. Third, I will raise a question on the common neglect of abstraction principles in studies of natural language. I will demonstrate that this neglect is the result of an assumption that natural language refers to the objects existing independently of that language, while formalized language needs a principle to introduce objects into a mathematical theory. Finally, I will criticize this assumption and argue that discussing abstraction principles for natural language could become a new way to the foundations of linguistics.

Keywords: Abstraction principle, Linguistics, Mathematics, Abstract objects, Methodology, Reference

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KARL JASPERS – THE CONTROVERSIAL PLACE OF SPEECH IN HIS “THEORY OF COMMUNICATION”

Amongst other achievements of his philosophical system, Jaspers is credited with developing a “theory of communication”. Considering that he places speech as a communicative tool within the area of the Encompassing of Objective *Reality* (part of the larger concept of the *Encompassing*) while at the same time communication as such is a component of *the Encompassing Which We Are* (subjective), I find this not only contradictory but actually standing in the way of communication. The argument clarifying this contradiction follows from the subjective-objective dichotomy presented below.

On the one hand, Jaspers claims that human beings have an “absolute will to communication”, ostensibly this being a “supreme achievement in this world” as the capacity for “communication from personality to personality” (Jaspers 1954: 71). Human beings, in other words, are “bound up with communication” which is understood as an essential feature of *the Encompassing Which We Are* (Jaspers 1957b: 79) in its subjectivity.

On the other hand, *the Encompassing of Objective Reality* is only present to us “insofar as it achieves communicability by becoming speech or becoming utterable”. This implies the conversational or spoken nature of communication understood as that which only occurs in the realm of the objective. Thus, even though Jaspers acknowledges that human community and sociality may occur in speech, at the same time he perceives speech as belonging to objective reality, depriving it of its communicative aspect.

And yet, paradoxically, Jaspers admits that communication is a conversation, in which we are from our very inception, since “[e]very new human being begins in communication” (Jaspers 1957b: 79). This aspect, developed further, leads to the question of philosophical faith and transcendence in Jaspers’ philosophy, a topic exceeding the scope of the present paper.

Keywords: Karl Jaspers; Speech; Communication; the Encompassing; Sociality of human beings.

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WORDS AND LANGUAGE DEPENDENCE

While the literature on words in the philosophy of language and ontology has continued to develop in recent years (see, e.g., Miller, 2021; Munroe, 2022; Nefdt, 2019), there is still considerable work to be done in establishing which expressions belong to the domain at issue. Among the perspectives shaping that domain is the idea that words are necessarily language-bound – that is, that a given word necessarily belongs to a given language. Linking words and language in this sense does seem intuitive enough, and it has been fairly broadly assumed throughout the literature in one form or another, whether outright or by corollary (Irmak, 2019; Hughes, 2023).

The constraint is simple but significant, particularly in the context of the philosophical discussion. The aim of this work is to critically examine it, raising two problematic cases: proper names and nonce-words. Where names are concerned, the discussion in the philosophical literature certainly appears to take them to be words; case in point, proper names take center stage in Kaplan’s highly-influential “Words” (1990). While names certainly are intuitively words, it is unclear whether names are intuitively language-bound. Though we may have, e.g., surnames that are phonotactically specific to a language, they are not subject to translation and are not thought to appear in the lexicon or lexis of a given language, which implies that they are not language-bound. The same may be said for nonce-words, which are one-off expressions coined for a single occasion and which gain no further recognition (Hohenhaus, 1998, 2007). They are far less common but similarly problematic. The language constraint accordingly presents us with a dilemma; either we need to explain how names and nonce-words belong to a given language, or we need to acknowledge that there may be words that are not part of any language.

Keywords: Ontology of words, Names, Nonce-words, Necessary condition, Dilemma

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A COMBINED APPROACH TO HYPERINTENSIONAL COUNTERFACTUALS

The debate around the hyperintensionality of counterfactual conditionals has been developed primarily along two distinct but related axes: the *counterpossible non-vacuity* axis (many counterfactuals with impossible antecedents seem false, despite the fact that standard intensional semantics makes all of them true); and the *formal invalidities* axis (some inferences about counterfactuals that are generally valid according to standard intensional semantics must be rejected). The Truthmaker Semantics developed by Kit Fine represents a powerful framework to address the latter axis, but it has not yet been extended to deal with the former. Furthermore, a significant amount of linguistic evidence shows that Fine's semantics displays important shortcomings with respect to counterfactuals with disjunctive and determinable antecedents. To deal with these, we present a novel, data-driven approach that combines Truthmaker Semantics with selection functions in the style of those employed in classic Stalnaker-Lewis approaches. The resulting account of counterfactuals gets the best of both worlds and satisfies all of our theoretical desiderata: it complies with the linguistic evidence, gives rise to an adequate hyperintensional logic and naturally allows for a non-vacuous evaluation of counterpossibles.

Keywords: Counterfactuals, Counterpossibles, Non-vacuism, Hyperintensionality, Truthmaker Semantics

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GROUP INDEXICAL BELIEFS IN RATIONALIZATION OF GROUP ACTION

Perry uses the Messy Shopper case (and similar cases) to argue that beliefs expressed by sentences with ‘I’ or demonstratives (‘she’, ‘he’, etc.) can’t be reduced to beliefs expressed by co-referring proper names or definite descriptions. The reason is that we can’t replace an indexical with a co-referring non-indexical in the rationalization and explanation of actions while preserving the explanatory power of the sentence. Perry also argues that indexical beliefs play such a fundamental role in action because they carry information about an object’s location relative to the believer (the ‘Self-Locating View’).

In this talk, I’ll argue that we can draw similar conclusions in the case of indexical beliefs held by groups. That is to say, group actions are motivated by indexical beliefs, such as beliefs expressed by ‘we are about to be attacked by a bear’ (we-belief) or that ‘she_[while pointing at Nora] is about to be attacked by a bear’ (group demonstrative belief), and they can’t be reduced to beliefs expressed by co-referring proper names or definite descriptions for similar reasons. Focusing on group demonstrative beliefs, I’ll argue that the Self-Locating view can’t be easily extended to them. Lastly, I offer an alternative approach to group demonstrative beliefs, where these are practical ways of thinking of objects—a natural extension of a view I have previously defended for indexical beliefs held, individually, by a person. Whereas in the individual cases, the practical way is a know-how to personally interact with the object of the belief, in the group case, it is a know-how to interact with it as a group. So, Perry is right that indexical beliefs are special, but group action and group demonstrative beliefs suggest that he is wrong about what is special about indexical beliefs.

Keywords: Indexicals, Rationalization of action, Group action, Self-locating beliefs, Group beliefs.

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MULTIMODAL TROPES IN INTERNET MEMES

Modern communication has become predominantly multimodal. Assuming that all forms of communication are rhetorical (as they are meant to trigger a specific impact on the audience and may lead to altering certain perceptions, attitudes, ideas), their persuasive strategies rely on rhetorical tropes (Forceville 2024). Since metaphor is nowadays considered a figure of thought rather than language, other tropes should function in a comparable manner. Thus, Forceville (2010, 2020, 2024) advocates the necessity to broaden traditional verbal rhetoric to “Multimodal Trope Theory” that should include not only metaphor and metonymy, which have been thoroughly discussed in the context of multimodal discourse, but other devices as well, for example simile, antithesis, hyperbole, or irony.

Memes are compact forms that thanks to their multimodal configuration can capture a lot of meaning. These dense constructions integrate verbal and visual elements that feature not only meaning-making mechanisms, such as associative links engaging the recipient (e.g. intertextuality, extra-contextual knowledge, individual experiences and perceptions of the world), but they also rely on rhetorical tropes. Memes have the power of making unrelated scenarios congruent, thanks to skilfully mingling them into a meaningful syntagm, in which tropes can take visual or verbal form. The presentation aims to discuss the function of selected rhetorical devices in chosen bimodal memes (image macros) that display the ups and downs of being an academic. Social media profiles such as High Impact PhD Memes or Academic Memes publish viral images that spotlight the challenging nature of research activities, teaching, or administrative tasks. In this context, memes can foster a feeling of community, offer solace, or simply serve as a source of amusement.

Keywords: Memes, Tropes, Multimodal communication, Internet

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ONE-TERM PHYSICALISM

In the planned talk I aim to argue for the legitimacy of a broadly physicalist position in the field of philosophy of mind that is almost entirely missing from the literature. The argument starts by showing a close resemblance of two famous philosophical arguments, namely Moore's open question argument and the so-called zombie or absent qualia argument. Then I present Nicholas Sturgeon's sharp criticism of the open question argument and then show how one can develop from this criticism a widely discussed legitimate metaethical view, namely *one-term naturalism* which states that moral properties are already natural, irrespective of any possible description of them in nonevaluative terms. I aim to argue that the same criticism can be made of the zombie argument. Therefore, we could define a similar theoretical position in the philosophy of mind, which I call *one-term physicalism* and which states phenomenal properties are already physical properties, irrespective of any possible relationships between them and other physical properties.

After all these, I would like to speak about the main motivation for endorsing one-term naturalism, namely the so-called Causal Criterion strategy, and show that the same motivation is present also in the case of one-term physicalism. Moreover, I argue that in the latter case, the motivation is even stronger, since we have stronger intuitions for the causal efficacy of phenomenal than of moral properties. I would also like to speak about the objections to the Causal Criterion strategy and argue for their relative weakness for one-term physicalism. As a conclusion, I aim to show that one-term physicalism has several argumentative advances over other kinds of physicalist theories about conscious mental states.

Keywords: Physicalism, Naturalism, Zombie-argument, Open question argument, Non-reductive theories

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DOES THE REFERENT OF “THAT” IN “THAT’S AN F” NEED TO BE AN F?

The predicative component of an utterance plays a crucial role in how demonstrative pronouns are interpreted. If someone says “That’s a lovely T-shirt” while pointing at a man across the room, we naturally take the referent to be the T-shirt—not the man himself, his behavior, or the shirt’s color. But if the speaker instead says “That’s my best friend” or “That’s our first meeting since high school,” the referent is understood quite differently. The gesture and pronoun alone are ambiguous; it is the predicative component that resolves the reference. This interpretive pattern holds also in the absence of a gesture.

In this talk, I explore the implications of this interpretive reliance on the predicative component for the semantics of demonstratives—a topic that has received relatively little attention in the literature. The predicative component guides interpretation by activating shared background knowledge between speaker and hearer. For example, when someone says, while looking at a group of people from a distance, “Look! That’s our new neighbor,” she expects the hearer to identify the referent based on a presumed familiarity with how the neighbor looks. While it seems uncontroversial that the predicative content helps guide interpretation, it would be problematic to claim that it determines the referent—after all, what one predicates of an object need not be true. I argue that such cases—where the relevant presupposed fact fails—pose a challenge to salience-based and conventionalist metasemantic theories, which struggle to explain what determines reference in such cases.

Keywords: Demonstratives, Demonstrations, Conventionalism, Salience, Common knowledge

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GROUNDING LEGAL AI IN ANALYTICAL JURISPRUDENCE

Artificial intelligence is a rapidly growing field that impacts all areas of life. In most cases specific uses of AI technology do not raise deep academic issues. Use of AI in law however, requires solid theoretical grounding. The area of AI supported legal reasoning, depends upon technical aspects of processing of legal texts, but also raises issues in various areas of philosophy. Philosophy of mind - how are legal decisions made; Philosophy of information - what constitutes legal information and how it is processed; Philosophy of language - what is the meaning of legal terms and how to interpret them; And finally philosophy of law and legal theory.

My presentation will touch on all of these subjects but the main focus will be the different approaches to legal interpretation specifically the difference between Maciej Zieliński's derivational model, and Marcin Matczak's concept of actualization of the possible world described by the corpus of legal texts. These ideas are in some ways opposite, but my goal is to bring them together by showing that they may be described in terms of two theoretical approaches to AI - symbolic and subsymbolic.

Beside an interesting, interdisciplinary theoretical framework, further advance of this topic may serve as a foundation for developing a so-called hybrid AI system for legal interpretation, that solves the current serious limitation of the legal AI systems i.e. difficulty of interpreting the results. In legal realm it is necessary not only to find the right answer to a legal issue, but also to show how this solution was obtained. Combining subsymbolic and symbolic approaches based on accepted schemes from theory of law, may be a valuable concept leading to new developments in the field of legal AI.

Keywords: Analytical philosophy, Legal philosophy, Legal Tech, Artificial Intelligence, Symbolic-subsymbolic, Hybrid AI

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AN *ANY*-CASE AGAINST LOGICALITY AS BASED ON SKELETONS

According to the Logicality of Language hypothesis, the language system contains a logical device to exclude analytic constructions as ungrammatical. The hypothesis has been defended along two distinct lines, namely as based on *logical skeletons* (Gajewski 2002, 2009) or on *standard logical forms* and *meaning modulation* (Del Pinal 2019, 2021; Pistoia-Reda and Sauerland 2021). In an original contribution, Pistoia-Reda and San Mauro (2021) argued against logicality as based on skeletons by showing that a propositional variant exists of the ungrammatical and analytical construction “Some students but John smoke” which nevertheless is: (i) based on *standard logical forms*; (ii) *analytical*, for the same logical principle that grounds the analyticity of “Some students but John smoke”; (iii) *grammatical*, in agreement with the possibility of removing its analyticity by meaning modulation. In this talk I show that a similar variant exists for the ungrammatical and analytical construction “There are any cookies left”, which has been used, influentially, to illustrate how the behaviour of *any* is key to understanding the “spontaneous logicality of language” (Chierchia 2013). In particular, my analysis makes use of a suitable correspondence between logical and set operators, which can provide for future applications to other cases.

Keywords: Logicality of Language, Grammaticality, Analyticities, Logical skeletons, Logical form, Meaning Modulation, Pragmatics

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LIE AS A PROTOTYPE CONCEPT

The traditional definition of lying dates back to St Augustine and says that lying consists in (i) saying what you believe to be false (ii) with the intention to deceive your audience. Recently this definition has come under attack, most notably from people who think that bald faced lies are genuine lies. You bald-faced lie if you say what you believe to be false knowing that both you and your audience know that it is false. If such lies are genuine lies arguably the intention-to-deceive condition has to be scraped off from the definition of lying. In order not to count irony and metaphors as lying, non-deceptionists modify condition (i) and say that you lie if you assert what you believe is false. So far, there is a stalemate in the debate between deceptionists and non-deceptionists. The latter construct dozens of scenarios in which people allegedly undeceptively lie, but the former reply that either (a) contrary to appearances there is an intention to deceive involved or (b) the utterance in question is not a lie since it is not an assertion.

In my talk I'm going to argue that the debate between deceptionists and non-deceptionists is unresolvable. The natural language concept of lying is prototypical, by which I mean that there is a paradigm of a lie and utterances may resemble it in some respects. The notion doesn't have clear boundaries and there is no determinate answer whether having particular properties suffices for being a lie. The idea of lie being a prototype concept has already been proposed by Coleman&Kay (1981), but my interpretation differs from theirs. Contrary to Coleman&Kay, I'll argue that 'lie' is not gradable. I'll also question their choice of prototype properties. I conclude that constructing further convoluted scenarios is a pointless enterprise.

Keywords: Bald-faced lie, Intention to deceive, Lie, Prototype

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HEGEL AND LEVINAS ON THE NOTION OF (NON-) CONCEPTUAL LANGUAGE

This paper recontextualises the semiotic argument examined by two prominent thinkers in continental philosophy. Although they articulate their argument through a different philosophical lens, both endeavour to analyse the movement of ‘being’ through either interiority or exteriority in relation to subjectivity. On the one hand, Friedrich Hegel insists on conceptual ‘logic’ (*Erinnerung*), whose central purpose and method is to clarify and purify the fundamental categories of thought. On the other hand, Emmanuel Levinas examines his reasoning within an ‘ethical rhetoric’ based on biblical rather than experimental evidence. Levinas vehemently argues against the total enforcement of the ‘I’ over the subject. Instead, he favours an intersubjective dissymmetry between subjects and other minds, which is falsely avoided in analytic philosophy.

Hegel raises the question of how philosophy should begin its inquisition in his *Phenomenology of Spirit*, and he examines at length the ‘internal’ argument that philosophy must begin with something that is given to consciousness. This is not to say that being is absorbed into thinking: it only means that the enquiry into being must start from thinking. Hegel’s *Philosophy of Nature* and *Philosophy of Mind* expound on thought as being combined with intuition (spatiotemporally), thereby accessing its schematisation. Thus, while Hegel’s system begins esoterically in a certain sense, it becomes exoteric over time. For Levinas, the argumentation of the movement of being in relation to subjectivity aims to overcome formal logic. He proposes an ontology that is not entirely reduced to being in the world, and a corresponding account of the self that is not entirely reduced to context. Levinas’ own texts are highly non-conceptual and ecstatic: The ‘work of language’ is (a) the entering into a relationship with the source of meaning that cannot be thematised, (b) the refusal of absolute closure, (c) the giving of signs before thematisation, and (d) the opening to transcendence.

Keywords: Hegel, Levinas, Language, Semiology, Subjectivity, Formal logic, Ethics

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CONCEPTUALIZING KNOWLEDGE: VISUAL AND SYNESTHETIC PARADIGMS IN INDO-EUROPEAN AND CHINESE THOUGHT

Linguistic structures do not merely convey thought but shape epistemological orientations, as suggested by the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. This contrast is evident in the divergence between Indo-European and Chinese traditions, where linguistic frameworks correspond to distinct ways of conceptualizing knowledge. While Indo-European thought privileges a visual paradigm, classical Chinese philosophy develops a holistic and synesthetic model, where meaning emerges from the interplay of multiple sensory and affective dimensions.

In Greek, θεωρεῖν (theōreîn, “to contemplate”) derives from ὁράω (horaō, “to see”), originally indicating attentive observation before evolving into intellectual contemplation. Similarly, εἶδος (eidos, “form, idea”) designates Platonic essences grasped through vision. Latin-derived intuition (intueri, “to look within”) and evidence (evidentia, from videre, “to see”) reinforce the link between knowledge and sight. Sanskrit follows a parallel trajectory: Veda (“sacred knowledge”) and Vijñāna (“discriminative knowledge”) stem from vid- (“to see, to know”), while darśana (“vision”) refers to entire philosophical traditions. Conversely, classical Chinese thought resists this visual bias, structuring cognition through a linguistic framework rooted in relationality and embodied perception. The radical 心 (xīn, “heart-mind”), which fuses rationality and affectivity, plays a key role in epistemology, appearing in 意 (yì, “intention”), 慧 (huì, “wisdom”), and 念 (niàn, “mindfulness”). Unlike Indo-European nous or the Kantian reason-emotion divide, xīn encodes this synthesis linguistically, illustrating how language conditions epistemological frameworks.

This perspective finds a contemporary development in Li Zehou’s historical ontology, which reinterprets cognition as an emotion-reason complex (qīng-lì). Rejecting Kantian formalism, Li argues that knowledge is mediated by affective structures shaped by history and culture. Rather than grounding cognition in abstract principles, his framework highlights the interplay of reason, emotion, and historically situated experience. By examining how linguistic structures shape epistemology, this study challenges the predominance of visual-determinative paradigms and highlights alternative relational and embodied perspectives.

Keywords: Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, Epistemology, Comparative epistemology, Chinese philosophy, Li Zehou.

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**THE PLURALITY OF GRAMMATICAL ARTICULATION RULES.
A COMPARATIVE AND HISTORICAL APPROACH BASED ON JOAO RODRIGUES
AND MOTOORI NORINAGA**

I analyse the relationship between logic and grammar, through the way in which the subject-verb-predicate logical reconstruction is put into crisis if we widen the focus beyond Indo-European languages. In undertaking this study, I also seek to give it a certain historical depth. Indeed, the way in which the first Jesuit grammars of Asian languages have been mobilised, both in theories of language in Japan and in philosophy in Europe, is decisive for understanding the constitution of the philosophical problem of grammar.

I propose first a philosophical re-reading of Jesuit works, particularly certain aspects of Joao Rodrigues' *Nihon Daibunten* (*Arte da Lingoa de Iapam*, 1604-1608) and *Nihon Shôbunten* (*Arte breve da lingua Iapoa*, 1620). On the one hand, there is a discrepancy between the classical Japanese language and the Latin categories used by the Jesuits to describe it: in particular, the subject-verb-predicate structure seems out of sync with the Japanese language.

On the other hand, grammatical questions were raised very early on in Japan, when scholars became aware of the gap between the spoken language and the Chinese characters used to write it, and tried to determine the status of this interplay between languages. As early as the 14th century, the *Tenihha Taigaishô* included an analysis of particles, auxiliaries, suffixes, endings and correlative linking rules (*kakari musubi*). I would like to focus on the contribution of Motoori Norinaga (*Teniwoha Himokagami*, 1771; *Kotoba no Tama no O*, 1779) and his discussion of the alternative grammatical concepts *teniwoha* and *kakari musubi*. Without sharing Motoori's motivations, his contribution raises an important question. How can we philosophically take account of the fact that there is a plurality of grammatical rules of articulation?

Keywords: Grammar, Logic, Japanese, Joao Rodrigues, Motoori Norinaga

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WITTGENSTEIN ON WHETHER TRIVIALITIES ARE SENTENCES

Trinh (2024) proposes the intriguing idea that there is an inconsistency in the *Tractatus* regarding trivialities, that is, contradictions and tautologies. The propositions below — he argues — can be variously derived from the text, but they are mutually incompatible.

A *sentences are pictures.*

B *trivialities are not pictures.*

C *trivialities are sentences.*

If, as A holds, being a picture is necessary for sentencehood, it follows that any combination that does not constitute a picture, as B asserts about trivialities, cannot be a sentence: but that trivialities are sentences is what is stated by C. To solve the inconsistency, Trinh proposes to integrate Wittgenstein with the tools of the logicity of language hypothesis.

In this contribution, instead of focusing on Trinh's proposal, we will consider how well founded the identification of the inconsistency is. Whereas — as we will argue — A and B are direct implications of Wittgenstein's picture theory, the Wittgensteinian status of C appears more controversial. We will begin by showing that the *Tractatus* actually contains C', which would remove the inconsistency.

C' *trivialities are not nonsense.*

The question, then, is whether one is allowed to substitute 'nonsense' with 'sentence', therefore moving from C' to C. We consider two options to this effect: 1) the two expressions are coextensional, that is, both Ψ (everything that is a sentence is non-nonsensical) and Φ (everything that is non-nonsensical is a sentence), hold; or 2) the first expression implies the second, that is, at least Φ holds. We will argue that the status of Ψ is controversial, mainly based on the existence of metaphysical possible propositions. We will then suggest that Φ is controversial too, based on a new conjecture that in Wittgenstein well-formedness is necessary for nonsensicality; our conjecture will include arguments from the semantics of unaccusatives.

Keywords: *Tractatus*; Logicity; Nonsense; Grammar; Logic; Information.

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A DAVIDSONIAN ACCOUNT OF THE REFERENTIAL FLEXIBILITY OF QUOTATIONS

Some philosophers argue that pure quotations can refer to different kinds of objects, including expressions, signs, pronunciations, concepts, and meanings (Washington 1992; Saka 1998; García-Carpintero 2003). For instance, the quotation in (1) refers to an expression, whereas the quotations on the right-hand sides of (2) and (3) refer to a meaning and a pronunciation:

- (1) 'red' has three letters.
- (2) 'rot' means 'red'.
- (3) The plural of 'woman' is pronounced 'wi-muhn'.

After criticising extant accounts of this feature of quotations, I propose an original version of Davidson's (1979) theory of quotations that accounts for it.

My proposal consists of two claims. First, a quotation consists of a demonstrative (surfacing as the quotation marks) and a truth-conditionally inert expression that is *displayed* to make itself, or an entity related to it, available for being referred to by the demonstrative. Second, the object of demonstration, and hence the referent of a quotation, is selected by the predicate in whose argument position the quotation occurs. I formally represent the predicate's capacity of selecting a referent as a *contextual restriction* imposed by the predicate.

My account avoids the problems of two popular accounts. The first, on which the referent of a quotation on an occasion of use is fixed by the speaker's intention on that occasion (García-Carpintero 2018; Saka 2006), over-generates readings of sentences containing quotations. The second account distinguishes between the *semantic referent* of a quotation (an expression) and its *speaker's referent* on an occasion of use (an entity related to the semantic referent) (Gómez-Torrente 2011). Against this account, I show that utterances of (2) and (3) differ significantly from utterances involving paradigmatic cases of speaker's reference.

Finally, I argue that my proposal offers a preliminary account of reports containing the 'quotative 'be like'', filling a gap in the literature on quotational contexts.

Keywords: Pure quotations, Demonstratives, Contextual restrictions, Semantic reference *vs.* speaker's reference, Quotative 'be like'

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**PREDICATE FUNCTORS, EXPRESSIVE POWER, AND THE ELIMINATION OF
FIRST-ORDER VARIABLES**

In a series of publications, W. V. Quine explored the idea that the variables of a first-order language can be ‘eliminated’, in the sense that each formula of the language can be transformed, in a step-by-step fashion, into an equivalent formula endowed with predicates and predicate functors, but entirely devoid of variables (See Quine 1960, 1976, Chapter 28, 1981, 1982, Chapter 45, 1986, pp. 170–172, 1995, pp. 33–35. Predicate functors are operators that generate complex predicates when they combine with one or more predicates.). In his discussions of this issue, however, Quine did not specify in full detail the relevant transformation algorithm, nor did he offer an explicit definition of the notion of semantic equivalence that is required to make sense of the claim that first-order variables are dispensable. In our presentation we will summarize the formal results of a paper devoted to overcoming these limitations of Quine’s approach. The paper focuses on the six predicate functors *Des*, *Im*, *inv*, *Ref*, *Neg*, and \times which Quine discussed in his seminal paper “Variables explained away” (1960).

In the paper we do three things. First, we characterize the syntax and semantics of a first-order language equipped with the above-mentioned Quinean functors. Second, we formulate an algorithm that allows us to transform any variable-based formula of our language into a variable-free formula of that language. Third, by relying on some of the literature on the concept of expressive power (see García-Matos & Väänänen 2005; Peters & Westerståhl 2006; Fernandes Pinheiro 2023; Cubides Kovacsics & Rey 2024), we prove that each step of our algorithm transforms its input formula into an equivalent formula. The outcome of the discussion is that the variable-free fragment of our language is as expressive as the language’s variable-based fragment, which means that, indeed, first-order variables are dispensable.

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CHARTING THE METAFICTIONAL REALM

This paper provides a new, systematic taxonomy for metafictional statements, i.e. statements containing a fictional name and overtly displaying a perspective external to the fiction. These are typically true *simpliciter*, as, e.g., “Mary Shelley created Frankenstein’s monster”; as opposed to fictional statements, i.e. statements containing a fictional names and overtly displaying a perspective internal to the fiction and typically true *in the fiction*, as, e.g., “Victor Frankenstein created Frankenstein monster”. It is generally acknowledged that metafictional discourse provides decisive linguistic data in favour of *fictional realism*, viz. the view that fictional characters really exist, as abstract cultural items. Indeed, metafictional statements are *prima facie* about something external to the fiction, i.e. in reality, viz. a *fictional character*. Analysing true metafictional discourse is thus a way of studying the nature of these entities without relying too much on shaky metaphysical intuitions. However, the semantical analysis for metafictional discourse is challenging and breeds controversies, especially because mixed-perspective statements, sharing features from both perspectives, seem to resist both traditional realist and irrealist approaches.

Abstracting away from the ontological debate proper, I here take a data-driven perspective on the issue. My aim is to make systematic distinctions within the linguistic data, including how one can “mix” perspectives, so as to provide a comprehensive taxonomy for all the metafictional statements scattered in the literature. The tidying up the linguistic data sheds interesting new light on the underlying notion of perspective, and how it is linguistically expressed. It is also relevant for the longstanding semantico-ontological debate because, contrary to what most philosophers have presupposed, I show that the linguistic data is not homogeneous enough to draw any definite conclusion yet. Finally, it emphasises a difficulty in how to interpret the “mixing” of perspectives, which breed competing philosophical interpretations.

Keywords: Fiction; Fictional names; Metafictional vs fictional statements; Mixed-perspective statements; Ontology; Realism vs irrealism

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CAN A MEMORY SIMULATIONIST BE A CAUSALIST WITH REGARDS TO MNEMIC REFERENCE?

The developments in the empirical sciences of memory over the last few decades have profoundly impacted our understanding of episodic memory—i.e. memory of personally experienced past events. This has prompted a reevaluation of the traditional causal theory of remembering (Martin & Deutscher, 1966), which posits a necessary (appropriate) causal connection between the memory representation of an event and the original representation formed at the time of the experience. Recently, some positions in the philosophy of memory, such as simulationism (Michaelian, 2016), argue that such a causal connection should not be viewed as necessary.

One complication arising from this line of thinking is that by rejecting the causal condition, we also seem to lose the most straightforward answer to the metasemantic question (e.g., Openshaw & Michaelian, 2024): What mechanism determines the specific event that a given episodic memory is about?

Or do we? In my talk, I argue that there is an alternative version of the causal story—different from the influential account originating with Martin and Deutscher—that can serve as the metasemantic basis for simulationism, although, interestingly, it cannot underpin simulationism as a theory of remembering. The key feature of my novel proposal is that it anchors the relevant causal connection not to the perceptual representation, but directly to the remembered event itself, thus circumventing reliance on the former.

Keywords: Memory, Reference, Metasemantics, Singular thought, Episodic memory

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INTERMEDIATE INFERENCEALISM AND THE PROBLEM OF OBSERVATIONAL SENTENCES

One of the main challenges for inferentialist theories is explaining the meaning of empirical expressions. Since inferentialism explains semantic content through inferential connections between expressions rather than extralinguistic facts, language risks becoming disconnected from empirical reality. This problem has been recognized in the literature by Brandom (2007), Peregrin (2014: 29-31), and recently by Reinikainen (2024).

This talk proposes a new solution to the problem of observational sentences by revisiting hyperinferentialism, an idea Brandom (1994) briefly considered but rejected. Hyperinferentialism claims that only narrow inferential rules (moving from sentences to sentences, e.g. ‘This is crimson’ to ‘This is red’) are sufficient to explain meaning. I build on this by endorsing an intermediate account that treats narrow inferences as central to meaning constitution but also uses broad inferences (moving from situations to sentences, e.g. from seeing a red thing to saying ‘This is red’) to explain what I will call ‘pragmatic competence.’ Pragmatic competence involves knowing auxiliary rules like ‘“There is an X” can be correctly stated in the presence of X.’ To illustrate the distinction between pragmatic and linguistic competence, consider a person who knows all inference rules but has vision problems that lead to misidentifying objects. They clearly know English but lack practical competence.

The motivation for separating linguistic and pragmatic competence is to keep the explanatory base as narrow as possible. Hyperinferentialist metasemantic explanation is the most economical, as it avoids using extralinguistic facts to constitute meaning. Additionally, it ensures that inferentialism does not rely on representational relations. The proposed account is similar to Simonelli’s (2023) hyperinferentialism, although there are two main differences: first, Simonelli does not make theoretical use of broad inferential rules, and second, he treats inferentialism as a semantic theory.

Keywords: Inferentialism, Metasemantics, Hyperinferentialism, Metaphysics of meaning, Foundations of meaning

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DOING THINGS WITHOUT WORDS

Some individuals who never acquire a natural language, such as non-verbal autistics, can nevertheless communicate with images, using systems known as Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC; e.g.: <https://arasaac.org/>). What can one communicate, or think, by using AAC? I shall argue that, for many purposes, the expressive power of even the simplest AAC system is practically the same as that of many other natural languages. I shall develop my argument in three steps.

The first step is to characterize the structure of AAC.

Based on work by David Gil (2017), I will argue that the structure of the simplest AAC system, consisting in unorganized catalogues of icons and pictures, is comparable to that of Riau Indonesian, a language with close to minimal morphology and syntax, and an associationist semantics.

The second step is to individuate the expressive power of AAC.

Riau Indonesian is used effectively in face-to-face communication to coordinate activities in cities such as Jakarta. Based on a view of communication as commitment sharing (Geurts 2019), I shall argue that the kind of action coordination afforded by Riau Indonesian involves commitment sharing. What can be done with Riau Indonesian can also be done with AAC, and so it is plausible to argue that AAC can be used to share commitments and coordinate activities on a large scale.

The third and final step is to individuate the potentialities of AAC for thinking.

Just as AAC can be used to share commitments interpersonally, it can be used to share commitments individually. The point of doing so can be, for instance, to organize one's own activities autonomously (Geurts 2019). So, I will argue, on a notion of thinking which encompasses planning, decision making, and problem solving, AAC can be as powerful a thinking tool as many other natural languages.

Keywords: Augmentative and Alternative Communication, Riau Indonesian, Action Coordination, Commitment; Self Talk

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SNAPE KILLS DUMBLEDORE, BUT DUMBLEDORE IS NOT DEAD: STATES AND EVENTS IN REPORTS ON FICTIONAL TRUTH

Consider fictional truth reports formulated with the ‘In fiction f, p ’-operator, e.g.:

- (1) In the Harry Potter novels, Dumbledore dies

The following is a simplified version of Lewis’s (1978) widely adopted analysis of such statements:

- (I) A statement of the form ‘In f, p ’ is true iff in all possible worlds compatible with f, p is true

So, (1) is true because the Harry Potter novels indeed state that Snape kills Dumbledore, and so in all possible worlds compatible with these novels (‘HP-worlds’), Dumbledore dies.

In this paper I propose a novel puzzle that the Lewisian analysis (and later refinements by Zucchi (2001) and Semeijn (2023)) cannot account for. It concerns the contrast between (1) and (2):

- (2) In the Harry Potter novels, Dumbledore is dead

Whereas (1) rings true, (2) seems false. But why? “Dumbledore dies” is only true in *HP-worlds at some point in time* during the events described in the fiction. “Dumbledore is dead” is also only true in *HP-worlds at some point in time* during the events described in the fiction (a much longer time to boot).

In this paper I evaluate different ways of drawing this contrast (i.e., is it the difference between Individual-level *versus* state-level predicates, or between telic *versus* atelic phrases), and suggest that we need two separate semantic analyses for reports on fictional truth:

- (II) In case p describes a fictional event, ‘In f, p ’ is true iff in all possible worlds compatible with f, p is true at *some* time that is part of the timeline of described events
- (III) In case p describes a fictional state, ‘In f, p ’ is true iff in all possible worlds compatible with f, p is true at *most* times that are part of the timeline of described events

Keywords: Events, Fiction reports, Fictional truth, (A)Telic phrases, States

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NEGOTIATING SCRIPTS WITH NORMATIVE GENERICS

Linguists and philosophers tend to note a distinction within the category of generics between *descriptive* generics that merely describe generalizations of a particular sort, and *normative* generics, that are thought to have a distinctly kind of normative flavor. Even if a bit vague, the distinction is based on a striking contrast, as (1) and (2) show.

(1) Rugby players don't cry.

(2) Boys don't cry.

An utterance of (1) is easily interpreted as a generalization about the kind in question, rugby players—namely, that they typically don't cry. An utterance of (2), on the other hand, tends to be understood setting or communicating some kind of normative standard about the kind. In line with these observations, analyses have proposed that normative generics give instructions, provide advice, or prescribe appropriate behavior. We concur that these are important and central uses of normative generics, but argue that the analysis should broaden its focus on some of the wider ways that normative generics figure in discourse. What we contend is that additional uses of normative generics—as means of derogation, or as giving voice to threats—are also quite central, yet the accounts alluded to above wouldn't adequately explain why. After making the case for these uses of normative generics, our talk focuses on bringing together theoretical resources that allow us to explain them. We follow a recent proposal which argues that a function normative generics discourse involves the activation of schemata and scripts in specific social situations. We argue that combining this proposal together with the metalinguistic account of generics from Krifka 2013 allows us to see normative generic discourse as a means of negotiating and policing normative expectations about the relevant kinds, and this, in turn allows us to analyze the relevant uses described above as derogations and/or threats.

Keywords: Generics, Scripts, Normative generics, Metalinguistic negotiation, Stereotypes

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PREDICATION: STRUCTURE AND/OR FUNCTION

Research in linguistics, philosophy of language, ontology, metaphysics, and logic makes ample, both explicit and implicit, use of the concept of predication. In the words of Ignacio Angelelli predication has been and continues to be the central topic of logic and ontology (or metaphysics) in the entire history of philosophy, from Antiquity till now (Angelelli 2017). For Nino Cocchiarella “predication has been a central, if not the central, issue in philosophy since at least the time of Plato and Aristotle” (Cocchiarella 1989: 253); whereas for John Searle, within a different theoretical and methodological frame, “predication, like reference, is an ancient (and difficult) topic in philosophy” (Searle 1969: 97).

Predication is also a core concept within linguistic theory, especially in functional and generative approaches to syntax. In this talk, I discuss the possible inspirations from philosophy of language (and to some extent also from logic) for contemporary linguistics. I concentrate on Frege’s views concerning the relation between logic and language, with special focus on Fregean predication, compared with appropriate developments in contemporary generative grammar. Though Fregean semantics is not concerned with natural language categories, his line of reasoning (especially the distinction between saturated and unsaturated functions) may be applied to analyzing predication as a grammatical relation. Frege’s approach is contrasted with the ideas put forward by Otto Jespersen, who offered a different, grammar-based, symbolization of syntactic structure.

Additionally, I focus on two approaches to predication proposed within the framework of generative grammar. Williams (1980) and Rothstein (1985) offered proposals for a general account of predication in terms of a primitive syntactic relation (linking relation or coindexation between the predicate and the subject). An alternative approach to predication within Minimalist syntax was formulated by Bowers (1993, 2001, 2017) and it assumes the existence of the category ‘Pr’ (predicative functional head), along with its phrasal projections. According to Bowers, this category “provides a uniform account of the syntax and semantics of every kind of predication relation encountered in natural language” (Bowers 1993: 653).

Keywords: Predication, Frege, Generative grammar, Predicate, Function, Copula

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AN INFERENTIALIST APPROACH TO FAKE NEWS

Since 2016, the phenomenon of fake news has gained popularity in interdisciplinary scientific research. For the different forms of fake news (e.g. social media, newspapers), two aspects are generally accepted: the intention to deceive and the news condition (cf. Anderau 2021). This includes discussing the role of lying (cf. Rini 2017, Rodríguez-Ferrándiz 2023, Grieve and Woodfield 2023).

From the perspective of a normative philosophy of language, a related question is suggested: should we treat fake news like lies? The paper analyses the issue using the pragmatic and normative toolbox presented in (Brandom 1994, 2000, 2002) by comparing the role of lies and fake news in deontic scorekeeping – in particular in the recipient's score.

Within deontic scorekeeping, a lie is a claim a speaker is not entitled to while being aware of and aiming for certain effects on a recipient's score (cf. Jary 2018). A lie, like any other claim, is part of the game of giving and asking for reasons, a commitment with a clear responsibility and the possibility of interpersonal authority through deferral.

Treating fake news like lies implies that news in general is treated like individual claims in bilateral scorekeeping. However, it seems that news plays a different role, that is similar to the role of observations and noninferential reports. In this case, the “news-condition” in the sense of “observations by proxy” would involve noninferential authority and a function as “regress stopper” for reason-askers. This way of understanding news can also lead to a less clear sense of responsibility or accountability.

This treatment of news implies a problematic limitation of the normative control involved in scorekeeping, which can be exploited by fake news, and opens up a discussion on the role of news and fake news in scorekeeping.

Keywords: Philosophy of language, Brandom, Inferentialism, Scorekeeping, Fake_news, News, Lies

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RECONFIGURING MEANING. SEMIOTIC INTERACTIONS BETWEEN LANGUAGE, COGNITION, AND EMERGING SYSTEMS

This presentation examines the dynamic mechanisms through which meaning is generated in systems of interaction, challenging anthropocentric paradigms in the philosophy of language and linguistics. By integrating insights from biosemiotics, cognitive semiotics, and the philosophy of technology, the study explores how signification processes extend beyond human cognition to encompass non-human entities such as microbial ecologies and artificial systems. Key questions addressed include: How do linguistic and semiotic processes materialize across diverse ontological domains? What are the epistemological and philosophical implications of recognizing agency and meaning-making in non-human systems? How can these insights inform and reshape contemporary theories of language and cognition? By addressing these critical issues, the presentation contributes to ongoing debates on the intersections of semantics, pragmatics, and the evolving role of semiotic agency in both natural and technological contexts.

Keywords: Semiotic agency, Epistemological tensions, Biosemiotics, Cognitive semiotics, Philosophy of language, Artificial systems, Non-human semiosis, Linguistic interaction, Meaning-making

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ON WHAT THERE IS NOT

XML (Extensible Markup Language) is a versatile and widely used markup language that plays a significant role in the field of Artificial Intelligence. XML has no rules for making inferences, nor does it impose any restrictions on the rules to be applied. This should guarantee a kind of theoretical and practical freedom in terms of what we can use in conjunction to XML, and therefore of what rules for making inference we can apply. This freedom, in turn, may reveal the epistemological attitude of the subjects toward an XML document, an attitude which, we cannot even rule out, may vary not only from subject to subject, but also on the basis of their own relation to different documents and contexts.

On these grounds, this talk investigates how the use of different rules for making inferences affects the understanding of what an XML document does not represent. The aim is to show that we can infer different, contrasting things from the same XML document, thereby weakening the communication that XML is supposed to support. First, I present three XML documents and raise a question about data that are not in the documents. Now, answering this question would not be a problem if only XML had rules for making inferences. Moreover, the fact that XML can be used in conjunction with any other technology, system, or theory that supports and defines its own rules would make the list of such answers potentially infinite. Far from exhausting such a list, I then present some representative examples of what I consider to be an exhaustive and mutually exclusive distinction between two *kinds* of rules for making inferences. Finally, I explore another strategy for answering questions about data that are not in an XML document, an answer that does not bring those rules into play.

Keywords: Philosophy of language, Markup languages, Rules for making inferences, Philosophy of computer science, Representation

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SYSTEMATICITY REVISITED

Systematicity has traditionally been defined in terms of and as a byproduct of compositionality. (Calvo & Symons, 2014) The traditional view is associated with symbolic – encodingist – atomistic approaches to understanding conceptual representation. However, this kind of understanding doesn't explain the emergence of new knowledge under systematic approaches. (Allen et al., 2024) Particularly rule-based approaches such as inferentialism (Peregrin, 2009), and associated model theories are left without a sufficient account of systematicity. Systematicity is key to understanding the link between intelligence – defined as capabilities of understanding, and symbolic- representational systems, such as language. (Hoyningen-Huene, 2013) Without explaining the role of systematicity in model theoretic frameworks, we lack a proper explanation that would provide a key to understanding the emergence of understanding in representational systems such as large language models. (Vaswani, 2017)

This paper is going to offer a rule based and holistic account of systematicity: functional well-formedness will be proposed to be prior to arbitrary and formal well-formedness. (Bickhard, 2007) The role of limiting constraints will be explored. I will make use of the notion of an implicit definition that is derivative from a system of premises/axioms. (Hilbert, 1902) This is fundamentally different from an explicit definition, which points to an equivalence, and requires mereological relations between atomistic parts of a system and the system itself. It will be argued that systematicity is prior to compositionality, and it is due to systematic considerations that individuable parts emerge as implicitly defined. One benefit of the offered approach will be flexibility with regards to emergence of new (abstract) objects, which allows for coherent expansion of models.

Keywords: Systematicity, Compositionality, Inferentialism, Interactivism, Model theory, Implicit definition

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SPEECH ACT THEORY AND ITS USEFULNESS IN THE CONTEXT OF HATEFUL LANGUAGE

The paper addresses the problem of the usefulness of speech act theory, especially in the Austinian tradition, in describing and analysing hateful language, including hate speech.

Speech act theory puts emphasis on the fact that “saying” means “doing”, that people commonly “do things with words”, and that it is not unusual that while using language people not just refer to the world and describe it, but rather create social reality and manage social relations. In this context speech act theory may seem to be particularly suited for the analysis of offensive discourse where a verbal action is commonly identified as an “attack”; however, accepting such an approach has its weaknesses.

Looking at selected contexts involving hateful language, the paper refers to the main tenets of Austin’s speech act theory, including the internal architecture of the act with its three aspects: locution, illocution and perlocution, as well as the problem of Speaker’s intention and conventionality of the act. The discussion aims to reassess the suitability of a speech act theoretic approach to hateful language.

Keywords: Speech act, Hate speech, Illocution, Locution

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ON THE VERY IDEA OF METAMETASEMANTICS

The concept of metasemantics has gained significant attention in recent philosophy of language. While semantic theory aims to assign meanings to expressions, metasemantics seeks to explain why semantic theory works the way it does – it addresses the question of what meaning is and where it originates [Burgess & Sherman, 2014]. Sider, building on Putnam’s Model-Theoretic Argument, argues that every metasemantic theory must confront the problem of indeterminacy of reference. To address this, he proposes an additional level of theory – metametasemantics – whose primary function is to resolve reference indeterminacy and link meanings to non-semantic entities [Sider, 2011]. For this task, Sider advocates for Lewis’s theory of reference magnetism, which suggests that when choosing between different conceptual schemes, we should select the one that “respects the objective joints in nature” [Lewis, 1984]. According to Sider, all metasemantic theories ultimately fall under reference magnetism, making it the dominant meta-theory. While other candidates for metametasemantic theories exist, reference magnetism is typically regarded as the most significant one [see Simchen, 2017] despite its many potential weaknesses [see Schwarz, 2012].

In my talk, I will challenge reference magnetism somewhat indirectly, namely by revisiting the Model-Theoretic Argument and arguing that it relies on what Davidson calls the “third dogma of empiricism” [Davidson, 1973], which leads to an incoherent dualism between the scheme (representation system) and content (the neutral empirical component independent of concepts) [Neale, 2001]. Rather than rejecting metametasemantics itself, which I believe remains a useful framework for comparing metasemantic theories, I aim to propose an alternative theoretical approach. My goal is to expand the notion of metametasemantics to include frameworks that avoid the pitfalls of reference magnetism and scheme-content dualism – one example being Davidson’s triangulation theory [Davidson, 2001; Verheggen, 2016].

Keywords: Metametasemantics, David Lewis, Reference magnetism, Indeterminacy of reference, Model-Theoretic Argument, Scheme-content dualism

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THE REASON-GIVING “BECAUSE”

Utterances of “because”-sentences are typically construed as assertions about an explanatory relation between the propositions expressed by the adjoining sentences: with “The street is wet because it has been raining” speaker *S* asserts that the fact that it has been raining causally explains the fact that the street is wet. However, the same utterance can also be used to give a reason for one’s belief that the street is wet. “Because”-sentences are ambiguous in *some* sense (see, e.g., Morreall 1979, Sweetser 1990, Kanetani 2019, Shaheen 2021). We aim to philosophically explore the ambiguity and consider some criteria that would differentiate between the two uses.

We argue that “because” is *level-ambiguous*. In its *fact-explanatory* use it operates on *mental state* content: with “The street is wet because it has been raining” *S* asserts and expresses the belief that the street is wet because it has been raining. In its *reason-giving* use, however, “because” operates on *expressive* content: on the attitudes expressed. With “The street is wet, because it has been raining” in its reason-giving use, *S* expresses that she believes that the street is wet because she believes that it has been raining. Reason-giving acts are not descriptions of explanatory relations between propositions but expressions of basing relations between attitudes. Thus, they are not truth-evaluable.

We explore several criteria to distinguish between the two uses: one criterion is based on the possible role of epistemic adverbs, the other depends on whether “as” can play the role of “because”, and a third, epistemological criterion refers to the agent’s rational update behavior. We end with discussing some philosophical consequences of the two uses of “because”.

Keywords: “Because”, Explanation, Reason-giving, Expressivism, Level ambiguity

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WHY DO DOGWHISTLES RESIST PHILOSOPHICAL ANALYSIS?

The success of a dogwhistle depends on the speaker's intentional ambiguity and the audience's interpretive agency—two factors that virtually preclude semantic analysis and hinder pragmatic evaluation. Combining this with the widely accepted deniability requirement creates a linguistic phenomenon that is both difficult to characterize and implausible to verify (unless the speaker confesses the truth uncovering her intentions).

An analysis of recent theories on dogwhistles (see Henderson & McCready 2024; Khoo 2017; Klieber 2024; Saul 2018, 2024; Stanley 2015) highlights several critical aspects necessary for defining this phenomenon. In addition to the criterion of deniability already mentioned, significant attention is devoted to audience fragmentation, particularly the distinction between target and general audiences, as well as the properties of the meanings intended for these audiences—covert (or coded) for the former and overt for the latter.

I will argue that the existing theories do not sufficiently account for the phenomenon of dogwhistles and fail to establish a clear and reliable framework that would allow for successful analysis and assessment of actual and potential dogwhistles. My aim is to show that the phenomenon of the dogwhistle is too evasive and broad to be framed by any coherent philosophical theory, and that the only way to capture and describe it is by carefully splitting it into smaller pieces and describing them accordingly.

Keywords: Dogwhistle, Pragmatics, Indirect communication, Covert meaning, Deniability, Intentionality

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Philosophy of Argumentation (PhilArg 2025)

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VOICING IDENTITY IN ARGUMENTATION: EXPLORING AUTHORIAL STANCE IN ARGUMENTATIVE WRITING

The way writers position themselves in relation to their arguments, sources and audience plays a crucial role in argumentative writing. Beyond simply justifying claims, stance also conveys the writer's identity, epistemic positioning and engagement with opposing perspectives. While stance-taking has been widely studied in native and non-native writing or within a single-language learner groups, its role in shaping identity-driven argumentation remains understudied, particularly across diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

This study investigates how Iranian and Norwegian university students majoring in language-related studies express authorial stance in argumentative essays. Using a corpus of 60 essays from the International Corpus of Learner English (ICLEv3), rhetorical and linguistic markers that signal identity positioning are analyzed. These markers include attitude markers, hedges, boosters, self-mentions, engagement markers and references to others. To systematically capture these elements, a multi-layered annotation scheme has been developed in this study, incorporating macro-structure, argumentative moves, argumentation schemes and lexical markers. By comparing the frequency, distribution and contextual use of these markers, key differences are explored in how students construct arguments not only to persuade but also to affirm their identity and align with particular discourse conventions.

Preliminary results indicate that Norwegian students use self-mentions three times more than Iranian students, a pattern that is accompanied by the tendency to delay the main claim until the final paragraph in Norwegian students' texts. The findings provide empirical evidence of cross-cultural variation in stance-taking across the four layers of macro-structure, argumentative moves, argumentation schemes and lexical markers. Moreover, by integrating corpus-based methodology with argumentation theory, this study advances the intersection of linguistics and philosophy of language, addressing broader questions of how identity is encoded in argumentative discourse. These insights have implications for second-language writing pedagogy, corpus linguistics and computational approaches to argument analysis.

Keywords: Authorial stance, Argumentative writing, Identity in argumentation, Stance markers, Corpus linguistics, Second-language writing, Epistemic positioning

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IN DIALOGUE WITH EXPERTISE: EPISTEMIC ASYMMETRY AND THE APPEAL TO EXPERT OPINION

The appeal to expert opinion (AEO) has garnered increasing attention in argumentation theory. Since Walton's dedicated monograph, argumentation scholars have generally seen AEO as a defeasible argument scheme whose strength can be evaluated in dialogues through critical questions. However, current normative frameworks only address discussions between epistemic peers, overlooking the complexities of epistemically asymmetrical dialogues: i.e., interactions where one party is an expert and the other a layperson. Such scenarios -- common in courts, doctor-patient interactions, political debates, etc. -- raise fundamental questions about the legitimacy of challenging experts and the obligations of both parties in the dialogue.

In this presentation, we are interested in three key questions that arise from contexts of epistemic asymmetry: (a) whether and how epistemic asymmetry creates an imbalance in the dialectical burdens of experts and laypeople; (b) the conditions under which laypeople can challenge an expert by recurring to an AEO ; and (c) the legitimacy of the expert's appeal to her own expertise.

First, we argue that current accounts in argumentation theory are unsatisfactory or structurally incapable of answering these questions. Then, we claim that the problem lies in the naive theory of expertise that is assumed as their background. Drawing on recent work in social epistemology and philosophy of expertise, we then show how these questions can be fruitfully addressed by introducing concepts such as *cognitive* versus *practical* expertise, *expert source* versus *epistemic authority*, and epistemic *dependence* versus *autonomy*.

By integrating insights from the epistemology of expertise, our approach advances a more nuanced understanding of AEO in argumentation theory, providing a basis for assessing the responsibilities and rights of both experts and laypeople in critical discussions.

Keywords: Appeal to expert opinion, Argumentation theory, Cognitive expertise, Epistemic asymmetry, Expertise, Social epistemology, Walton

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THE INDIVIDUAL ARGUER IN COMPETITIVE DEBATES. INSIGHTS FROM THE COMPETITIVE DEBATES CORPUS

Competitive debates offer a unique perspective to analyze arguments' goals, functions, and effects in structured discourse. While widely recognized as a setting for developing rhetorical skills and critical thinking, competitive debates have not yet been sufficiently examined through the lens of argumentation theory. Limited access to systematically curated data and the absence of interactive analytical tools have constrained research into the strategies employed by individual arguers.

In our presentation, we will offer insights from the competitive debates corpus, an ongoing project to facilitate systematic analysis of argumentation in competitive debating. Our work highlights how individual debaters construct arguments, navigate strategic constraints, and adapt rhetorical techniques to different debate roles. The corpus enables users to filter and examine debates based on various parameters, such as motion types, speaker roles, argumentative structures, linguistic strategies, and stylometric patterns based on several annotation layers.

We will describe the annotation framework adopted in the corpus, present examples of debate dynamics captured by linguistic metrics, characterize debater types, and discuss selected argumentative strategies debaters employ to fulfill their roles. Our findings contribute to a deeper understanding of the role of the individual arguer in competitive debates and provide methodological advancements for scholars in linguistics, rhetoric, and argumentation studies.

Keywords: Competitive debates, Corpus linguistics, Argumentation, Persuasion, Natural language processing

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REFLEXIVITY AND THE NORMATIVE FOUNDATIONS OF DISCOURSE: RECONCILING CONTEXTUAL PLURALITY AND TRANSCENDENTAL VALIDITY

This paper examines the normative presuppositions that underpin discourse theory, advancing an original framework to reconcile the inherent tension between context-dependent justification and transcendental validity. Drawing upon Jürgen Habermas's theory of communicative rationality and Karl-Otto Apel's transcendental pragmatics, the analysis interrogates the self-reflexive mechanisms of discourse as both a critical and normative enterprise. Central to this exploration is the triadic conception of truth—pragmatic, epistemic, and epistemic-transcendent—as a regulative idea that enables the resolution of semantic dissonance and the validation of meaning across diverse contexts. The research contributes to the philosophy of language and argumentation theory by foregrounding the ethical and procedural dimensions of argumentative praxis. It highlights the performative obligations intrinsic to discourse—equality, reciprocity, and co-responsibility—which condition the possibility of intersubjective rationality and normative coherence. These obligations are shown to transcend mere formal-procedural constraints, forming the ethical bedrock upon which meaning and truth are dialogically constructed and critically examined. By situating discourse within a broader dialogical-dialectical framework, this paper elucidates how normative presuppositions function as quasi-transcendental anchors that sustain the interplay between local practices of meaning-making and universal criteria of validity. The approach resists the dual perils of relativism and dogmatism, proposing instead that reflexivity operates as a pivotal heuristic for navigating the epistemological and normative crises characteristic of contemporary philosophical and sociocultural landscapes. This study extends existing theoretical paradigms by demonstrating how the praxis of rationally motivated consensus, grounded in self-reflexivity, can address the challenges of normative fragmentation and epistemic pluralism. Through this lens, discourse emerges not merely as an analytical construct but as a transformative practice capable of fostering mutual understanding and resolving conflicts of meaning in a fractured world.

Keywords: Discourse theory, Reflexivity, Normative presuppositions, Communicative rationality, Argumentation, Truth, Intersubjectivity.

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COMBATIVENESS MODIFIERS IN UNDERGRADUATES AND SENIORS' ARGUMENTATIVE PATTERNS

In Dębowska-Kozłowska and Hample (2022), we reported on how Polish undergraduates and graduates ($N = 243$) perceived interpersonal arguing. We observed a clear pattern of Polish undergraduates disfavoring conflict, insisting on civility and cooperation, opting for pleasant arguments, and sidestepping emotional encounters. Given the results, we suspected that the avoidance of antisocial arguments derived from the socio-political history of Poland. We assumed that the young generation of Poles did not simply give up the collective behaviors and ideals of their parents and grandparents. In the present study, we set out to investigate Polish undergraduates and seniors' argumentative patterns. Our aim is to see whether the collective, prosocial and, possibly, historically rooted approach is prevalent in the seniors' argumentative encounters. We also consider how the stakes involved in the seniors' and undergraduates' own arguments might modify their combativeness. Following Hample et al. (2016), we define argument stakes as the subjective importance of matters at hand. Both high-stakes and low-stakes scenarios' influence on willingness to argue is discussed. Among others, we consider instrumental and relationship kinds of argument's importance and discuss how various stakes might relate to one another. As concluded in Zietlow and Sillars (1988) and Santibáñez et al. (2021), American and Chilean seniors become more confrontational and aggressive when their valuation of the matter at hand was high. Relying on the construct of "argument stake", we intend to see whether subjectively salient, high-risked matters induce aggressiveness and production of confrontative statements in both age groups of Poles.

Keywords: Interpersonal arguing, Conflict, Argument stakes, Antisocial arguments, Prosocial arguments

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FIRST-PERSON WITTGENSTEIN

Theoretically, argumentative discourse is impersonal; however, the strategic use of personal pronouns remains a crucial rhetorical and epistemological device even within this framework. Philosophical texts, by their very nature, often engage in dialogue with established traditions of thought, challenging or refining prevailing ideas. As a result, they frequently employ a spectrum of personal pronouns to position the author within an intellectual landscape—whether as an individual thinker, a representative of a collective, or an observer of a broader epistemic structure.

In this regard, Wittgenstein’s philosophical style offers a particularly compelling case for analysis, characterized as it is by a sententious, at times even caustic, tone. Wittgenstein makes extensive use of the first-person plural alongside the first-person singular. Adding further complexity, he occasionally employs the third-person singular—not merely in impersonal statements but also in instances where a distinct “he” appears, set apart even from the collective “we”.

This study will focus primarily on the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* to examine how Wittgenstein’s argumentative discourse navigates the spectrum of personal pronouns. When he employs the first-person plural, does it function as a royal or humble “we”? Is it inclusive or exclusive? Similarly, his use of “I” may suggest a generic subject—a paradoxically inclusive “I”—or it may serve as a marker of a strong, autonomous subject set in contrast to the world or the state of knowledge. To complete this spectrum, I will also analyze Wittgenstein’s use of other pronominal forms, considering their specific contexts and seeking to identify the pragmatic forces that shape his choice of one form over another. By synthesizing these findings, I will evaluate whether the pronominal framework in Wittgenstein’s discourse is justified primarily on epistemological grounds or whether it serves a pragmatic function.

Keywords: Ludwig Wittgenstein, Personal pronouns in philosophy, Inclusive vs. exclusive “we”, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Textual pragmatics

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THREE LEVELS OF ARGUMENT FUNCTIONALITY

There is a good deal of scope for misunderstanding and confusion in the phrase ‘the function of arguments’. This is partly down to the ambiguity of the word ‘argument’ which has been much discussed, but also a result of the possible different perspectives which can be taken concerning ‘functions’. We argue here that there are (at least) three ways to conceive of argument functionality and that they form a tripartite hierarchy: the sub-argumental level, the argumental level, and the supra-argumental level of argument function.

At the sub-argumental, or intra-argument, level we find the elements which go to make up an argument: premises (of different types), inferences (of different types also), and conclusions. To these may be added backings, qualifiers, and rebuttals (following Toulmin), and perhaps other forms of evidence, explication, and expression. We discuss the roles of each of these aspects and endeavour to go beyond the simple notion that the premises support the assertion found in the conclusion.

The argumental level of functionality is concerned with the role that the argument as a whole plays, intentionally or not, in the discourse wherein it appears. Again, we look beyond the basic notion that arguments persuade those who hear them, and identify five main functions: Persuasion, Expression, Explanation, Exploration, and Provocation. We provide a list of sub-categories for each of these and give examples of real world use.

The third level is the supra-argumental, or inter-argument, functionality. Here we are concerned with the role of the argument more broadly understood as a set of exchanges making up a dialogue. Parallels are drawn with the discourse types identified by Douglas Walton and the genres of communication presented by van Eemeren and Houtlosser. The analysis is less focussed on the goals of participants, however, and more concentrated on outcomes, real and potential.

Keywords: Argument function, Inference types, Toulmin, Discourse types

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THE RIGHT KIND OF EXPERTS: HYPOCRISY AND CONFIRMATION BIAS IN META-ARGUMENTS ON EXPERT OPINION

In this paper we examine the reasoning used in favour of accepting or rejecting arguments from expert opinions in matters of public interest. We compare these meta-arguments with the critical questions (CQs) suggested for the argument from expert opinion scheme by Walton and others. This allows us to determine whether the meta-arguments follow the paths predicted by those CQs or whether arguers prefer to bring in outside reasons, not related to the acceptability of the original argument, possibly as a result of their preconceptions and biases. This paper uses as a case study the differing views on the credibility of expert economists displayed in the Guardian newspaper when they were supporting the same cause as the Guardian during the UK's EU membership referendum, and when they took an opposing view over government spending restraints. We take into account both published articles and the 'below the line' responses to them by readers. Our analysis suggests that while the principles upon which the expert advice is accepted or rejected do not directly contradict each other, the interpretation of the situation is clearly influenced by the preferred outcome of the editorial writers. We find evidence that public debate does follow the lines of argument suggested by the CQs for argument from expert opinion and that two new questions, concerning the level of seriousness of the situation and the degree to which the expert considers ethical implications, could usefully be added.

Keywords: Argument from expert opinion, Argument evaluation, Meta-argumentation, Hypocrisy, Bias

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PATHOS MINING: DETECTION OF EMOTIONAL APPEALS IN ARGUMENTATION WITH LARGE LANGUAGE MODELS

This study investigates the application of Large Language Models (LLMs) for pathos mining, i.e. automatically identifying emotional appeals in natural language argumentation. Based on the interactional pathos model (Konat, Gajewska, Rossa, 2024), this research extends the model to a novel computational context. The theoretical foundation builds on Walton's (1992) conceptualization of emotion in argumentation, integrating into a systematic framework for analyzing emotional appeals.

Annotating texts with GPT models is increasingly seen as akin to employing student annotators, both in terms of variability and reliability, as GPT exhibits a level of inter-annotator agreement comparable to minimally trained human annotators, though it lacks domain-specific expertise or interpretative intuitions of humans (Rathje et al., 2024, Rønningstad, Velldal, & Øvrelid, 2024)

The study uses data from original experimental work, where students were engaged in a competitive debate setting after receiving professional training. Transcripts of these debates were annotated using GPT-4 via API to identify pathos categories, including anger, fear, sadness, joy, and disgust. The results reveal how participants intuitively employed a variety of pathos strategies, with fear and sadness being most frequent emotional appeals. For instance, in one debate, a speaker argued against social media by stating, "This allows social media to control us, which is fundamentally wrong", an appeal intended to elicit anger by framing social media as a controlling and threatening force.

The findings demonstrate that LLMs can emulate human annotators in detecting emotional appeals, with levels of agreement comparable to those between human coders. However, challenges remain, particularly in distinguishing between the speaker's emotions and intentional emotional appeals directed at the audience.

Keywords: Natural language argumentation, Emotional argumentation, Pathos, Emotional appeal, Pathos mining, LLM, Annotation

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DEVELOPING A PARAMETRIC ACCOUNT OF REPHRASE TYPES

Rephrase is a common discourse phenomenon where a statement is reformulated, with or without significant modifications. It serves various purposes, such as clarifying a statement by rephrasing it in different words, enhancing its rhetorical impact through repetition, or reinforcing the speaker's credibility by creating the impression of presenting additional support for earlier remarks. Through these functions, rephrasing plays a critical role in effective communication, aimed at ensuring that the intended message is understood, accepted, and retained by the audience.

Studying rephrase across different discourse genres requires annotations grounded in a detailed and robust theoretical framework. While several models of rephrasing have been proposed, they often lack systematicity. Specifically, existing taxonomies fail to meet the criteria of mutual exclusivity and exhaustiveness. This leads to overlapping categories and instances of rephrasing that do not fit any defined type, creating challenges for accurate annotations and analyses.

This paper introduces a new theoretical model of rephrase to address these limitations. The methodology draws inspiration from the parametric approach used in the Periodic Table of Arguments (PTA) and its associated Argument Type Identification Procedure (ATIP). By analogy, the proposed model systematically categorizes rephrasing types by identifying relevant parameters and the range of their values. These parameters allow for a more precise and comprehensive classification, eliminating ambiguities and gaps in existing models. Building on this theoretical model, the paper outlines the main steps of a Rephrase Type Identification Procedure (RTIP) that facilitates annotators to identify and classify different types of rephrasing in discourse.

By addressing the shortcomings of existing models, this work contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of rephrasing and its role in communication. Additionally, it paves the way for future research and practical applications in discourse analysis and computational linguistics.

Keywords: Rephrase, Communication, Annotation, Corpus linguistics

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AI AS AN ARGUER: HOW CAN AI ENGAGE IN LEGAL ARGUMENTATION

In legal context, AI is currently utilised as an assistive tool supporting case law analysis, contract review and retrieval augmentation. But can it be recognised as an arguer, an agent who presents a claim, supports it with reasoning and evidence and engage with counterarguments, by which it influences legal decision-making? Aristotle dissected reasoning and argumentation into three components: logic, dialectic and rhetoric. Each of the components have different purpose, method and outcome. Logic aims to establish objective truths via deductive and inductive reasoning which results in formal proof or disproof. Dialectic tests and refines arguments via debates to achieve clarification or synthesis of ideas. Lastly, rhetoric is used to persuade an audience with the use of ethos, pathos and logos, and it arrives at effective persuasion. Each appeal has a different purpose. Ethos appeals to credibility and character of the speaker to establish trust in them. Pathos taps into emotion in order to connect with the audience, motivating it to care and take action. Logos provides the argument with a logical structure and evidence to deduce or infer from.

In this paper to justify that AI could be an arguer, I will take each element under a microscope and examine its applicability in the context of Explainability in AI, enhanced through Argumentation Frameworks. Even if AI is not yet considered an independent legal arguer, it may not serve as a replacer, but it can certainly function as an augementer.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Argumentation, Explainability, Legal Arguer, Artificial Reasoning

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IS AN IDEAL CRITICAL THINKER NECESSARILY CHARITABLE?

The principle of charity has seen increasing recent interest in the critical thinking literature, building on past work that brought it into argumentation theory (see, e.g., Scriven, 1976; Adler, 1996; Johnson, 1980). Where the principle may be thought of as indicating which interpretation of a given ambiguous argument one ought to pursue, it appears to dovetail with or reinforce the dispositions or virtues associated with critical thinking. A good example of this can be seen in Ennis's (1996) description of the ideal critical thinker and the dispositions they ought to exhibit. The principle of charity as presented by Govier (2018), Stevens (2020, 2021), and Lewiński (2012), among others, complements his major points, which include caring for the other and a commitment to discovering and listening to others' views and reasons. Charity and dispositions do seem to converge, or at least that is the impression one might have from a general perspective.

Despite appearances, however, the two streams of research remain largely separate, with little to no mention of dispositions in texts on charity, and vice versa. The present work looks to explore the divide between them from a somewhat unusual perspective: it is argued here that an ideal critical thinker may opt out of the principle of charity – that is, one can opt out of selecting charitable interpretations of ambiguous arguments while still being an ideal critical thinker. Though counterintuitive, the argument does appear to hold, in that there does appear to be a sense in which one may be an ideal critical *thinker* without being an ideal *arguer*. While this ideal thinker might not be pleasant (or productive) to interact with, the possibility of this sort of case implies that there is a disconnect between work on the principle of charity and the literature on dispositions and virtues, challenging the apparent common ground between the two and providing an interesting space for further

Keywords: Critical thinking, Principle of Charity, Dispositions, Virtues, Ideal thinker

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**PRAISE AND BLAME, BETWEEN RHETORICS AND ETHICS.
A RE-READING OF DEWEY (1932) ON VIRTUE THEORY**

In the 1932 revised version of the book written with James H. Tufts, *Ethics*, John Dewey made a series of argumentative moves that have rarely captured attention, and to which this paper intends to be devoted (Pappas, 2008; Edel, 2001). Let us recall that in the second part of the book, devoted to moral theory, Dewey distinguished three traditions, one focusing on the good and ends pursued, the other on the Right, and the third turning on character and exemplary action, each having a chapter devoted to it. I will limit myself only to the latter here, even though Dewey underscores the importance of the three trends and suggests a required unification of them. In and after Cicero, praise and blame have been seen both as crucial aims and as springs of action by the rhetorical tradition, and it also happens that *arètè* or excellence in action, with the notion of *ethos* oftentimes translated as character, was quite important in that tradition that also can be retraced to Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* (Aubenque, 2014). One of the bold moves Dewey makes in the 13th chapter of *Ethics* (1932) is to link this tradition not with the Greeks or the Romans, but with the English going from Hume and Shaftesbury to Bentham and Mill. He thus transforms both the virtue tradition by focusing on its origin in approval (or disapproval) of human action, and the utilitarian tradition by connecting it to issues of excellence in action, while criticizing its hedonistic tendency. The aim of the paper is to document these moves by analyzing a few key arguments he puts forward in that process, while discussing the value of the results both for the utilitarian and for the virtue theory tradition.

Keywords: Dewey, Argumentation, Rhetoric, Virtue Ethics, Moral theory

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RETHINKING DEEP MORAL DISAGREEMENTS: RATIONALITY, ART, AND PERSUASION

The notion of ‘deep disagreement’ has received increasing attention in recent years following Robert J. Fogelin’s (1985) seminal text ‘The Logic of Deep Disagreements’ (cf. Godden and Brenner 2010; Godden 2019; Pritchard 2021, 2025; Lavorerio 2021, 2023; Almagro 2024; Manhire & Kronqvist 2025). Fogelin draws on Ludwig Wittgenstein’s *On Certainty* (1975) to describe forms of disagreement that are not resolvable by appeals to facts, and that persist despite agreement in fundamental moral convictions. Fogelin’s suggestion, that at a certain point all one may be able to do in such cases is “fall back on persuasion”, has been criticised by Duncan Pritchard (2021) as “a worrying way for deep disagreements to get resolved”. For Pritchard, who develops an alternative hinge proposition-based account of deep disagreements, “there will always be a rational way of engaging with the other party” (1123).

In this talk, I argue that Pritchard’s response to Fogelin, and the alternative account he develops, is grounded in a priori presuppositions of argumentation that do not track with what language use in the context of deep disagreements reveals to us. One of the consequences of Pritchard’s approach is a distortion of what I call the ‘ethical-interpersonal’ relations between the parties involved in deep disagreements. I attempt to recalibrate the discussion by considering how forms of persuasion, described by Wittgenstein in *On Certainty* as attempts to give another one’s “picture of the world” (OC 262), rather than something to worry about, may illuminate the kind of difficulty that deep disagreements present us with. To this end, I consider the lyrics and music video to Kendrick Lamar and Taylour Paige’s song ‘We Cry Together’ as an artistic intervention into polarising public discourse around sex and gender.

Keywords: Deep disagreement, Wittgenstein, Certainty, Hinge propositions, Polarisation, Sex and gender

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A DIALOGUE MODEL FOR GIVING ADVICE: EXPERTISE, TRUST, AND PITFALLS

The philosophical discussion around the phenomenon of advice has traditionally focused on the question of whether the speech act “advise” is directive or assertive. Recently, attention has shifted towards considering the broader practice of giving advice, putting into focus its dialogical character. Nevertheless, a clear account of what an advisory dialogue looks like is missing. I aim to fill this gap by developing a dialogue model for giving advice.

My interest lies in situations of practical reasoning: An advisee faces a situation where they need to decide what to do and seek advice from an advisor. Advice is given in form of a recommendation for action. By way of practical examples, I argue that this process can be described as a two-stage argumentative dialogue. Namely, advising has an information-seeking part, where the advisor needs to learn about the situation of the advisee, and a persuasive part, where the advisor justifies their recommended course of action.

A central feature of this model is that the persuasion stage allows us to distinguish different types of advice. A recommendation for action has to be justified from a certain perspective. For instance, the advisee might want a recommendation from the perspective of what is morally right or what would serve their interests best. Different perspectives give rise to different types of advice, which have subtle impact on important aspects of advice.

According to the dialogue model, the role of *expertise* can generally be characterised as being twofold: While the advisee is the expert on their situation and perspective, the advisor is often more knowledgeable about available actions and their consequences. The advisee’s *trust* in the advisor can be important in that it makes the persuasion stage practically feasible. Finally, we can illustrate different *pitfalls* of advice, such as one-sided or blindly accepted advice.

Keywords: Advice, Dialogue Types, Argumentation, Persuasion, Expertise, Trust, Deliberation

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CONFIDENCE AND CREDIBILITY

There is evidence that people believe confident speakers more readily than less confident speakers: greater confidence makes a speaker more persuasive. This is reasonable if speakers reliably making claims which are well supported consistently adopt a confident tone while those who harbor doubts consistently adopt a less confident tone. If this is case, then hearers should be able to factor that information into their assessment of what they are being told.

But there are problems: our ability to interpret one another's expressed confidence may be subject to biases such that some individuals are read as less confident than others in virtue of non-epistemically relevant factors such as their gender, race, or accent. Moreover, speakers more concerned with rhetorical success than epistemic responsibility might employ signals of confidence deceptively, while speakers who are unreliable assessors of their epistemic credentials might signal honestly but inaccurately. An arrogant speaker will project confidence when they should not while an insecure speaker might do the opposite.

I will argue that whether a speaker's greater confidence should increase our credence in what they have to say depends on (1) whether the speaker is sincere in their expression of confidence and (2) a competent judge of the strength of their own reasons. In other words, it depends on whether the speaker is epistemically trustworthy (or *credible*, in the sense of Fricker (2007)) with respect to higher order evaluations of their own epistemic situation. I will argue further that our judgements of speakers' self-evaluative credibility is subject to similar kinds of systematic credibility imbalances as our judgements of first order credibility. Consequently, taking speaker confidence as a heuristic in determining whether or not to believe an individual's testimony can result in distinctive forms of testimonial injustice.

Keywords: Testimonial injustice, Credibility, Epistemic trust, Biases, Confidence, Deception

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A REFINED CONCEPT OF *A FORTIORI* ARGUMENTS FOR ARGUMENTATION THEORY

The main goal of the paper is to provide the theoretical model for the *a fortiori* argument. After a brief history of *a fortiori* argument (especially in the works of Aristotle, Alexander, Cicero, and Boethius) we propose its general concept, components, and argumentation schemes, its classification, and finally, criteria for assessment. The main reason for this research is that this type of argument receives little attention in contemporary argumentation theory, and consequently critical thinking students have little knowledge of it, and yet, *a fortiori* arguments (or “arguments from the stronger”) are prevalent in both, academic and public, discourse. Therefore, the need to incorporate the concept of *a fortiori* argument into argumentation theory seems even more crucial. Additionally, we develop the diagrammatic method of assessing the inference in such arguments to finally present four critical questions needed for a critical evaluation of *a fortiori* argument.

Keywords: A fortiori argument, A simili, Analogy, Argument from the stronger, Argumentation scheme, Comparative argument, From the less, From the more

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A CRACOVIAN DEBATE: COOPERATIVE DEBATE FORMAT BASED ON THE DIALECTICAL PRINCIPLE OF CHARITY

The main aim of this paper is to present a new format of academic debating, referred to as the “Cracovian debate,” which has the cognitive gain of all participants as its sole objective, and whose cooperative nature facilitates the achievement of that goal. The format of the debate is strictly based on the concept of “dialectical principle of charity” — an approach that considers the principle as a procedure for critical discussion. First, we highlight the need for such a format by demonstrating how the competitive nature of existing academic debate formats (such as Oxford-style, British Parliamentary, and Lincoln-Douglas debates) hinders one of their primary aims—fostering the ability to learn from the exchange of differing opinions. Next, we outline the structure of the Cracovian debate. Finally, we provide several arguments supporting the hypothesis that this format surpasses competitive debating in promoting the following skills: (1) openness to new information and disconfirming feedback; (2) the ability to understand opposing views in a manner acceptable to their proponents; (3) the careful analysis of arguments; (4) the capacity to cooperate with individuals holding different perspectives on the issue at hand; and (5) perceiving peers as potential collaborators rather than rivals. The proposed model has been already empirically tested in pilot research in 2021–2024, which provided significant feedback on the debate dynamics, and confirmed the initial hypotheses the detailed results of pilot research are attached to the paper.

Keywords: British Parliamentary debate, Competitive debate, Cracovian debate, Dialectical principle of charity, Karl Popper debate, Lincoln-Douglas debate, Oxford debate

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THOUGHT EXPERIMENTS IN SERVICE OF CONCEPTUAL ENGINEERING

It is a common view that thought experiments are either types of arguments or play a crucial role in constructing them. However, much of the literature focuses narrowly on one specific type of argument facilitated by thought experiments that involves using them to provide counterexamples for theories, exemplifying the so-called method of cases. Moreover, this usage is often explored within a descriptive framework, where thought experiments are understood as contributing in uncovering the nature of scrutinized concepts or phenomena.

In the talk, I adopt a different metaphilosophical perspective, conceptual engineering, which sees philosophical inquiry as a normative, rather than descriptive, endeavor. Specifically, I explore how thought experiments can exemplify or support arguments not about the nature of X, but about how we ought to think about X. I will discuss the interpretations of the method of cases seeing it as a normative tool useful for conceptual engineering (Andow, 2023; Sękowski, 2024).

Beyond the method of cases, I discuss other ways thought experiments contribute to normative approaches. Among others, I will discuss their role in the genealogical method, which, following Queloz (2021), exemplifies a distinct approach to conceptual engineering. I also address their use in reverse-engineering methods that provide descriptive insights to motivate normative projects, aligning with the functional perspective on conceptual engineering advocated by Thomasson (2025). I discuss the structure and the impact several kinds of thought experiments in conceptual engineering endeavor.

Keywords: Thought experiments, Conceptual engineering, Methodology of philosophy, Normative methodology, Concepts

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**‘LET’S WIN THIS’ VERSUS ‘MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN’:
DISCURSIVE CONSTRUAL OF POLARIZATION IN THE HARRIS-TRUMP 2024 US
PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE**

The statement ‘The 2024 US election has been the most consequential election for society in history’ may turn out not to be hyperbole. The outcome of grave worldwide issues (e.g. WWII, climate change or the status of liberal democracy) was likely decided by the US electorate. One means of convincing the electorate to vote is by polarizing a debate. Therefore, the role that polarization has in the 2024 US presidential debate is of global concern and of scholarly interest.

The research aims to investigate the discursive mechanisms underlying the construal of political polarization in the pivotal American 2024 presidential debate between Harris and Trump. Polarization is understood as ‘a process whereby the normal multiplicity of differences in a society increasingly align along a single dimension and people increasingly perceive and describe politics and society in terms of ‘Us’ versus ‘Them’” (McCoy et al., 2018, p. 16). Thus, ‘for polarisation to happen, the idea of two distinct and homogenous groups needs to be created’ (Marchal et al., 2023, p. 14), with these groups typically framed as the ingroup ‘*we*’ and the outgroup ‘*they*’. Similar to nationalist or racist discourse (e.g. Krzyżanowski, 2009, 2014; Reisigl, 2017; Wodak, 2009, 2016, 2022, 2023), the mechanisms of such categorization rely on the discursive construction of a dichotomy: a positive ‘*us*’ and a negative ‘*them*’. Accordingly, the analysis of the discursive mechanisms of political polarization is deemed possible within a similar perspective. The methodology, therefore, adopts the discourse-historical approach (DHA) to analyze how political polarization is discursively enhanced in high-stakes political communication. Following DHA’s methodology, specific emphasis will be placed on the role argumentation schemes have in discursive strategies.

Keywords: Polarization, Discursive strategies, Argumentation, Fallacies, Election debate

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CORPUS-BASED ANALYSIS OF SUBJECT-PREDICATE ARGUMENT STRUCTURE

The aim of this paper is to identify typical patterns and trends in the use of arguments for the sake of understanding deep argument structures in natural communication. Although a rich variety of computational and corpus linguistics approaches to argumentation explore ways in which phrases in an argumentative discourse are composed, the study of strategic uses of certain elements of premises and conclusions still has not yet arrived at a systematised conceptual framework.

To address the need for developing a structured account of the role of deep components of argumentation, we employ the Periodic Table of Arguments (PTA) that is essentially based on the parametric approach to the internal structure of arguments and thus is capable of serving as a model frame to design a large scale empirical study of strategies of using deep argument structures in a discourse. To this end, a qualitative analysis of cases and the creation of an initial annotation scheme is needed. By means of the distinctions used in the PTA framework, we analyse selected cases of arguments with PTA in order to propose a pilot scheme for the annotation of argument components involving such layers as: (i) subject and predicate, and (ii) types of statements (values, facts and policies). By overlaying these two levels of annotation, we are able to identify subtle persuasive strategies, such as, for example, the rhetorical use of predicates referring to policies.

Our ultimate goal is to propose a model for capturing fine grained argument components which is complementary to the sentence-level analysis of argumentation (i.e. the level of premises and conclusions) within the inferential take on communication. This theoretical work will further allow us to design annotation schemes and corpora for studying key strategic uses of deep argument structures. Methods of corpus linguistics will be in the long run aimed at creating argument analytics showing large scale patterns, trends, and tendencies in rhetorical strategies involving subjects, predicates, and other fine grained components of an argumentative discourse.

Keywords: Argument analysis, Subject, Predicate, Annotation, Corpora

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**ALAN TURING’S “HEADS IN THE SAND” OBJECTION AS A STRATEGIC MOVE:
CASE STUDY OF AUTONOMOUS VEHICLES DEBATE**

In his seminal 1950 paper, Alan Turing discusses several counter arguments for the idea of thinking machines. We believe that the “Heads in the Sand” Objection (hereafter HSO) is especially interesting. HSO claims that the consequences of having machine thinking would be too dreadful, and thus it is better for us to believe it to be impossible. Turing’s response to the objection is short and to the point – the argument needs not to be refuted, as it is based on and appeals to emotions. The role of this argument however is important, since it points out some dangers behind the idea of thinking machines and the emotional reactions that it provokes.

In our talk, we will provide an account of the debate concerning Automated Vehicles (Autonomous Vehicles, AV), which has been active in the years 2016 to 2018 as seen through the lenses of HSO. AV have raised many concerns both on the part of academics and the greater public, most of those concerns being related to the question of what the car should do in the case of an unavoidable accident, and various ethical considerations around it. Based on the sources’ analysis we conclude that both academic and popular discourse cannot grasp the ethical problems around AV through a rational discussion. In both cases, at some point, it becomes obvious that rational discussion will not be the way to solve the issue, and different means will be employed. The claim of inherent emotionality can be further justified by looking at the historical development of the discussion, or rather lack thereof.

We argue that - as in the aforementioned objection - the fundamental nature of those discussions is not rational, but emotional. We also claim that the HSO scheme may serve as a handful tool for recognising irrational discussion types (also the current ones concerning LLMs).

Keywords: Autonomous (Automated) Vehicles, Alan Turing, Argumentation, Artificial Intelligence, Ethics

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THINKING IN ANALOGY: ARGUMENTATION IN THE LITERARY WORK OF J. M. COETZEE'S "THE LIFE OF ANIMALS"

This talk analyzes an argument presented in John Maxwell Coetzee's *The Lives of Animals* as it appears in *Lecture I: The Philosophers and the Animals*, originally delivered as two lectures at Princeton University on 15th and 16th of October 1997, as part of the Tanner Lectures on Human Values.

The argument under scrutiny in its structuralized version can be summarized as follows: the people who lived in the countryside around Treblinka, as well as the contemporary people, share a common tendency to remain indifferent to large-scale acts of violence happening in their vicinity. Given that the bystanders during the Holocaust contributed indirectly to the perpetration of the crime, it is argued by analogy that the contemporary people, through their participation in widespread meat production, similarly contribute to ethical and systemic wrongdoing.

The aim of this presentation is to critically assess presented argument from analogy by identifying its strengths and weaknesses. The analysis is preceded by clarification and narrowing of the terms specific to the elements included in the argument (for instance, livestock in total will be limited to one species and the world's production will be confined to one region). Additionally, the paper explores the broader implications of employing such argument within the fictional realm.

Keywords: Argument from analogy, J. M. Coetzee, *The Lives of Animals*, Treblinka, Mass meat production

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ARGUMENT MINING IN A ABORTION DEBATE: A NEW POLISH DATASET

Argument Mining (AM) is a young discipline focused on identifying and extracting inferential structures in texts. One main challenge in this field is the limited availability of datasets, especially for languages other than English. To address this gap, we present a new, experimental dataset for Polish, based on a spontaneous, multi-participant debate on abortion recorded in 2024 on the “Zero” YouTube channel. Abortion—particularly following the 2020 tightening of abortion laws—remains one of the most polarizing issues in Polish public discourse and was also a major topic in the 2023 parliamentary election campaign. Using semi-automatic methods (Whisper followed by manual correction), we produced an orthographic transcription, then manually annotated argument structures according to a premise–conclusion model. We considered both explicitly stated structures and those conveyed implicitly (e.g. conversational implicatures). Seven trained annotators worked with a jointly developed annotation guidelines. We then assessed inter-annotator agreement across multiple subsets of the annotated data by applying measures such as Fleiss’ Kappa (resulting in values below 0.4). Finally, by employing a majority-vote criterion, we derived a gold standard annotation from the aggregated annotations.

We also examined correlations between selected discourse markers—particles and conjunctions such as “bo/because”, “ponieważ/since”, “więc/so”, and “ale/but”—and argument structures, but found them weak. On the basis of the entire annotation process, we propose best practices for manual annotation in AM, particularly when employing simplified (premise–conclusion) models and addressing implicit argumentation. Our data set and analysis can inform both AM research and the evaluation of large language models, especially those trained on Polish-language data (e.g., PLLuM). We anticipate these resources will benefit not only linguistics and computer science, but also political science, sociology, and other fields interested in discourse analysis.

Keywords: Argument Mining, Public space, Abortion, Multi-participant debates, Pragmatics, Discourse, Datasets

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